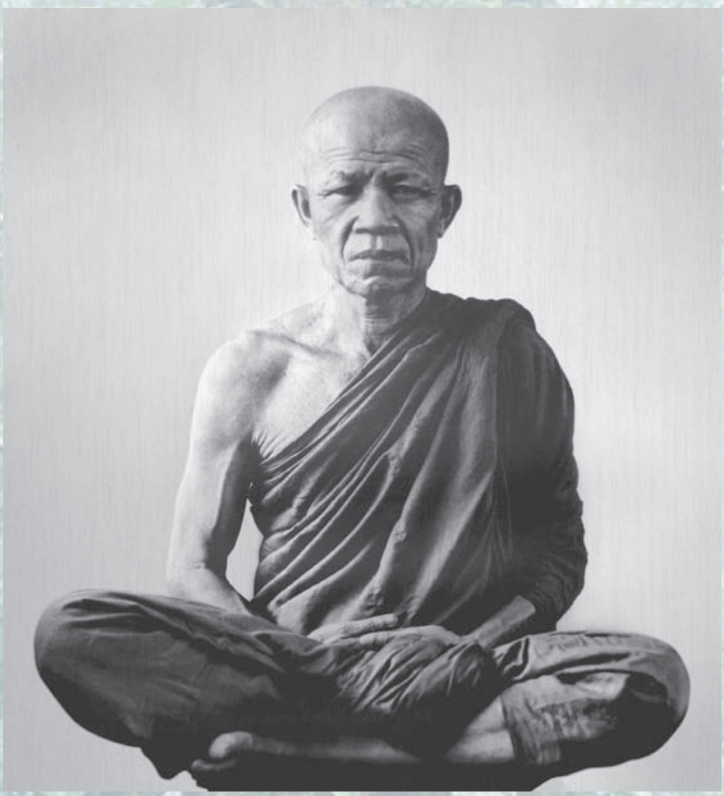
ARAHATTAMAGGA ARAHATTAPHALA

The Path to Arahantship



A Compilation of Venerable Ācariya Mahā Boowa's Dhamma Talks About His Path of Practice

Translated by Bhikkhu Sīlaratano

Arahattamagga Arahattaphala

The Path to Arahantship

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About His Own Path of Practice

Translated from the Thai by Bhikkhu Dick Sīlaratano

Forest Dhamma Books
Baan Taad Forest Monastery

"The gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts"
— The Buddha

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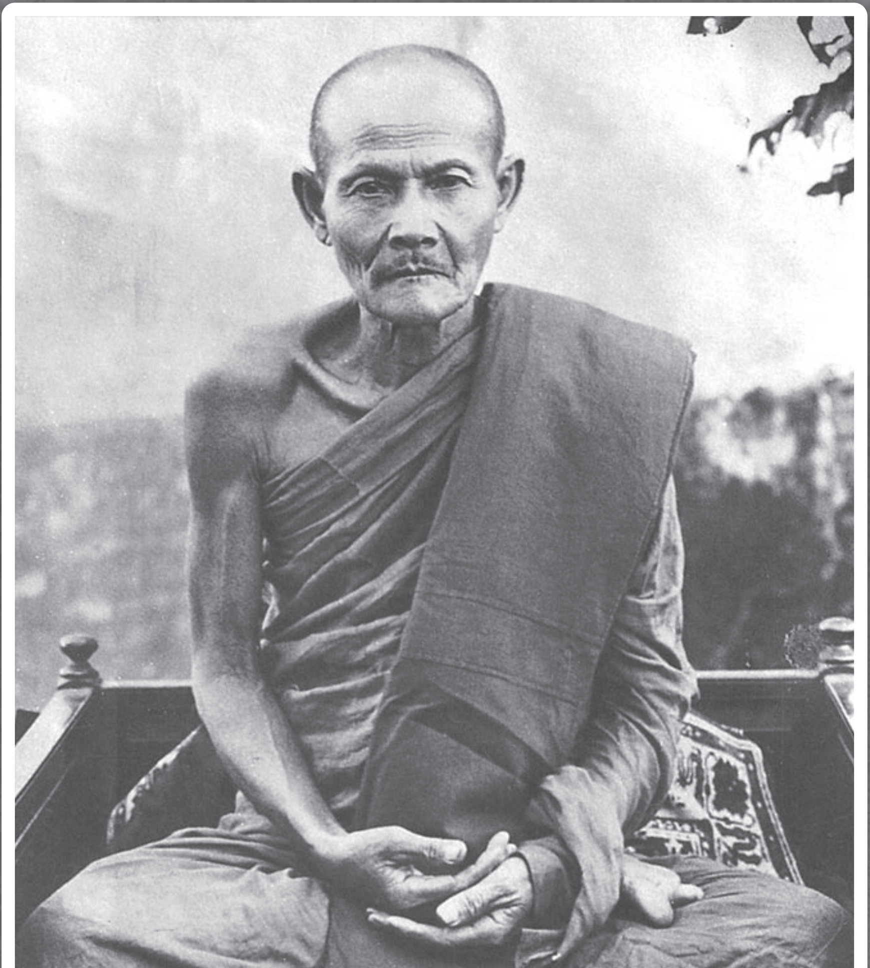
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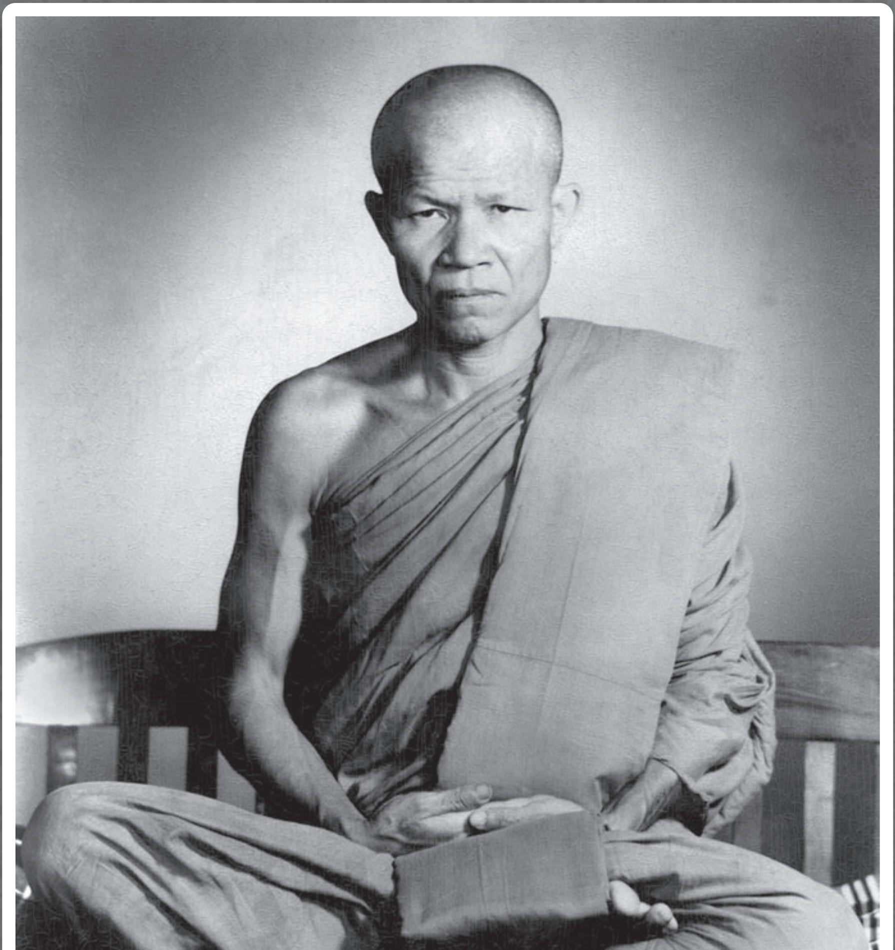


A Forest Dhamma Publication of Baan Taad Forest Monastery



Venerable Ācariya Mun Bhūridatta Thera

(1870-1949)

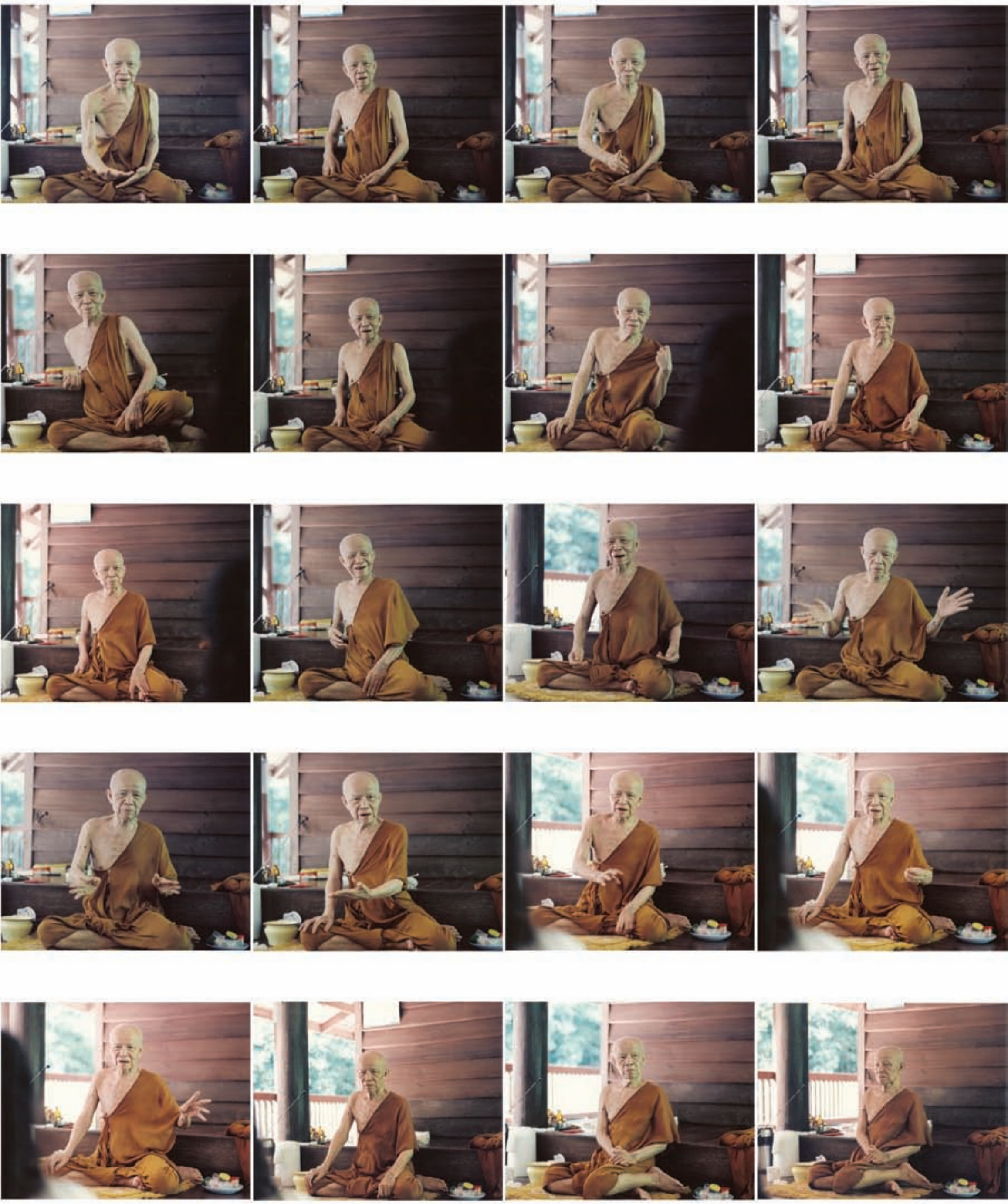


Venerable Ācariya Mahā Boowa Ñāṇasampanno Thera

(1913-)

Part 1





Arahattamagga

The Direct Route to the End of All Suffering

A Compilation of Venerable Ācariya Mahā Boowa's Dhamma Talks About the Development of His Meditation Practice.

At present, all that is left of Buddhism are the words of the Buddha. Only his teachings—the scriptures—remain. Please be aware of this. Due to the corruption caused by the defiling nature of the *kilesas,* true spiritual principles are no longer practiced in present-day Buddhism. As Buddhists, we constantly allow our minds to be agitated and confused, engulfed in mental defilements that assail us from every direction. They so overpower our minds that we never rise above these contaminating influences, no matter how hard we try. The vast majority of people are not even interested enough to try: They simply close their eyes and allow the onslaught to overwhelm them. They don't even attempt to put up the least amount of resistance. Since they lack the mindfulness needed to pay attention to the consequences of their thoughts, all their thinking and all they do and say are instances of the *kilesas* giving them a beating. They surrendered to the power of these ruinous forces such a long time ago that they now lack any motivation to restrain their wayward thoughts. When mindfulness is absent, the *kilesas* work with impunity, day and night, in every sphere of activity. In the process, they increasingly burden and oppress the hearts and minds of people everywhere with *dukkha.*

In the time of the Buddha, his direct disciples were true practitioners of the way of Buddhism. They renounced the world for the express purpose of transcending *dukkha.* Regardless of their social status, age or gender, when they ordained under the Bud-

dha's guidance, they changed their habitual ways of thinking, acting, and speaking to the way of Dhamma. Casting the *kilesas* aside, the disciples ceased to follow their lead from that moment on. With earnest effort, they directed all their energy toward purifying their hearts and cleansing them of the contamination created by the *kilesas.*

In essence, earnest effort is synonymous with a meditator's endeavor to maintain steady and continuous mindful awareness, always striving to keep a constant watch on the mind. When mindfulness oversees all our mental and emotional activities, at all times in all postures, this is called "right effort". Whether we're engaged in formal meditation practice or not, if we earnestly endeavor to keep our minds firmly focused in the present moment, we constantly offset the threat posed by the *kilesas.* The *kilesas* work tirelessly to churn out thoughts of the past and the future. This distracts the mind, drawing it away from the present moment, and from the mindful awareness that maintains our effort.

For this reason, meditators should not allow their minds to wander into worldly thoughts about the past or the future. Such thinking is invariably bound up with the *kilesas,* and thus, hinders practice. Instead of following the tendency of the *kilesas* to focus externally on the affairs of the world outside, meditators must focus internally and become aware of the mind's inner world. This is essential.

Largely because they are not sufficiently resolute in applying basic principles of meditation, many meditators fail to gain satisfactory results. I always teach my pupils to be very precise in their pursuit and to have a clear and specific focus in their meditation. That way they are sure to get good results. It is important to find a suitable object of attention to properly prepare the mind for this kind of work. I usually recommend a preparatory meditation-word whose continuous mental repetition acts as an anchor that quickly grounds the meditator's mind in a state of meditative calm and concentration. If a meditator simply focuses attention

on the presence of awareness in the mind without a meditation-word to anchor him, the results are bound to be hit and miss. The mind's knowing presence is too subtle to give mindfulness a firm basis, so the mind soon strays into thinking and distraction—lured by the siren call of the *kilesas.* Meditation practice then becomes patchy. At certain times it seems to progress smoothly, almost effortlessly, only to become suddenly and unexpectedly difficult. It falters, and all apparent progress disappears. With its confidence shaken, the mind is left floundering. However, if we use a meditation-word as an anchor to solidly ground our mindfulness, then the mind is sure to attain a state of meditative calm and concentration in the shortest possible time. It will also have the means to maintain that calm state with ease.

I am speaking here from personal experience. When I first began to meditate, my practice lacked a solid foundation. Since I had yet to discover the right method to look after my mind, my practice was in a state of constant flux. It would make steady progress for awhile only to decline rapidly and fall back to its original untutored condition. Due to the intense effort I exerted in the beginning, my mind succeeded in attaining a calm and concentrated state of *samādhi.* It felt as substantial and stable as a mountain. Still lacking a suitable method for maintaining this state, I took it easy and rested on my laurels. That was when my practice suffered a decline. My practice began to deteriorate, but I didn't know how to reverse the decline. So I thought long and hard, trying to find a firm basis on which I could expect to stabilize my mind. Eventually, I came to the conclusion that mindfulness had deserted me because my fundamentals were wrong: I lacked a meditation-word to act as a precise focus for my attention.

I was forced to begin my practice anew. This time I first drove a stake firmly into the ground and held tightly to it no matter what happened. That stake was *buddho,* the recollection of the Buddha. I made the meditation-word *buddho* the sole object of

my attention. I focused on the mental repetition of *buddho* to the exclusion of everything else. *Buddho* became my sole objective even as I made sure that mindfulness was always in control to direct the effort. All thoughts of progress or decline were put aside. I would let happen whatever was going to happen. I was determined not to indulge in my old thought patterns: thinking about the past—when my practice was progressing nicely—and of how it collapsed; then thinking of the future, hoping that, somehow, through a strong desire to succeed, my previous sense of contentment would return on its own. All the while, I had failed to create the condition that would bring the desired results. I merely wished to see improvement, only to be disappointed when it failed to materialize. For, in truth, desire for success does not bring success; only mindful effort will.

This time I resolved that, no matter what occurred, I should just let it happen. Fretting about progress and decline was a source of agitation, distracting me from the present moment and the work at hand. Only the mindful repetition of *buddho* could prevent fluctuations in my meditation. It was paramount that I center the mind on awareness of the immediate present. Discursive thinking could not be allowed to disrupt concentration.

To practice meditation earnestly to attain an end to all suffering, you must be totally committed to the work at each successive stage of the path. Nothing less than total commitment will succeed. To experience the deepest levels of *samādhi* and achieve the most profound levels of wisdom, you cannot afford to be halfhearted and listless, forever wavering because you lack firm principles to guide your practice. Meditators without a firm commitment to the principles of practice can meditate their entire lives without gaining the proper results. In the initial stages of practice, you must find a stable object of meditation with which to anchor your mind. Don't just focus casually on an ambiguous object, like awareness that is always present as the mind's intrinsic nature. Without a specific object of attention to hold your

mind, it will be almost impossible to keep your attention from wandering. This is a recipe for failure. In the end, you'll become disappointed and give up trying.

When mindfulness loses its focus, the *kilesas* rush in to drag your thoughts to a past long gone, or a future yet to come. The mind becomes unstable and strays aimlessly over the mental landscape, never remaining still or contented for a moment. This is how meditators lose ground while watching their meditation practice collapse. The only antidote is a single, uncomplicated focal point of attention; such as a meditation-word or the breath. Choose one that seems most appropriate to you, and focus steadfastly on that one object to the exclusion of everything else. Total commitment is essential to the task.

If you choose the breath as your focal point, make yourself fully aware of each in-breath and each out-breath. Notice the sensation created by the breath's movement and fix your attention on the point where that feeling is most prominent; where the sensation of the breath is felt most acutely: for example, the tip of the nose. Make sure you know when the breath comes in and when it goes out, but don't follow its course—simply focus on the spot where it passes through. If you find it helpful, combine your breathing with a silent repetition of *buddho,* thinking *bud* on the point of inhalation and *dho* on the point of exhalation. Don't allow errant thoughts to interfere with the work you are doing. This is an exercise in awareness of the present-moment; so remain alert and fully attentive.

As mindfulness gradually establishes itself, the mind will stop paying attention to harmful thoughts and emotions. It will lose interest in its usual preoccupations. Undistracted, it will settle further and further into calm and stillness. At the same time, the breath—which is coarse when you first begin focusing on it—gradually becomes more and more refined. It may even reach the stage where it completely disappears from your conscious awareness. It becomes so subtle and refined that it fades and disap-

pears. There is no breath at that time—only the mind's essential knowing nature remains.

My choice was buddho meditation. From the moment I made my resolve, I kept my mind from straying from the repetition of *buddho.* From the moment I awoke in the morning until I slept at night, I forced myself to think only of *buddho.* At the same time, I ceased to be preoccupied with thoughts of progress and decline: If my meditation made progress, it would do so with *buddho;* if it declined, it would go down with *buddho.* In either case, *buddho* was my sole preoccupation. All other concerns were irrelevant.

Maintaining such single-minded concentration is not an easy task. I had to literally force my mind to remain entwined with *buddho* each and every moment without interruption. Regardless of whether I was seated in meditation, walking meditation or simply doing my daily chores, the word *buddho* resonated deeply within my mind at all times. By nature and temperament, I was always extremely resolute and uncompromising. This tendency worked to my advantage. In the end, I became so earnestly committed to the task that nothing could shake my resolve; no errant thought could separate the mind from *buddho.*

Working at this practice day after day, I always made certain that *buddho* resonated in close harmony with my present-moment awareness. Soon, I began to see the results of calm and concentration arise clearly within the *citta,* the mind's essential knowing nature. At that stage, I began to see the very subtle and refined nature of the *citta.* The longer I internalized *buddho,* the more subtle the *citta* became, until eventually the subtlety of *buddho* and the subtlety of the *citta* melded into one another and became one and the same essence of knowing. I could not separate *buddho* from the *citta's* subtle nature. Try as I might, I could not make the word *buddho* appear in my mind. Through diligence and perseverance, *buddho* had become so closely unified with the

citta that *buddho* itself no longer appeared within my awareness. The mind had become so calm and still, so profoundly subtle, that nothing, not even *buddho,* resonated there. This meditative state is analogous to the disappearance of the breath, as mentioned above.

When this took place, I felt bewildered. I had predicated my whole practice on holding steadfastly to *buddho.* Now that *buddho* was no longer apparent, where would I focus my attention? Up to this point, *buddho* had been my mainstay. Now it had disappeared. No matter how hard I tried to recover this focus, it was lost. I was in a quandary. All that remained then was the *citta's* profoundly subtle knowing nature, a pure and simple awareness, bright and clear. There was nothing concrete within that awareness to latch on to.

I realized then that nothing invades the mind's sphere of awareness when consciousness—its knowing presence—reaches such a profound and subtle condition. I was left with only one choice: With the loss of *buddho,* I had to focus my attention on the essential sense of awareness and knowing that was all-present and prominent at that moment. That consciousness had not disappeared; on the contrary, it was all-pervasive. All of the mindful awareness that had concentrated on the repetition of *buddho* was then firmly refocused on the very subtle knowing presence of the calm and converged *citta.* My attention remained firmly fixed on that subtle knowing essence until eventually its prominence began to fade, allowing my normal awareness to become reestablished.

As normal awareness returned, *buddho* manifested itself once more. So I immediately refocused my attention on the repetition of my meditation-word. Before long, my daily practice assumed a new rhythm: I concentrated intently on *buddho* until consciousness resolved into the clear, brilliant state of the mind's essential knowing nature, remaining absorbed in that subtle knowing presence until normal awareness returned; and I then refocused with increased vigor on the repetition of *buddho.*

It was during this stage that I first gained a solid spiritual foundation in my meditation practice. From then on, my practice progressed steadily—never again did it fall into decline. With each passing day, my mind became increasingly calm, peaceful, and concentrated. The fluctuations, that had long plagued me, ceased to be an issue. Concerns about the state of my practice were replaced by mindfulness rooted in the present moment. The intensity of this mindful presence was incompatible with thoughts of the past or future. My center of activity was the present moment—each silent repetition of *buddho* as it arose and passed away. I had no interest in anything else. In the end, I was convinced that the reason for my mind's previous state of flux was the lack of mindfulness arising from not anchoring my attention with a meditation-word. Instead, I had just focused on a general feeling of inner awareness without a specific object, allowing my mind to stray easily as thoughts intruded.

Once I understood the correct method for this initial stage of meditation, I applied myself to the task with such earnest commitment that I refused to allow mindfulness to lapse for even a single moment. Beginning in the morning, when I awoke, and continuing until night, when I fell asleep, I was consciously aware of my meditation at each and every moment of my waking hours. It was a difficult ordeal, requiring the utmost concentration and perseverance. I couldn't afford to let down my guard and relax even for a moment. Being so intently concentrated on the internalization of *buddho,* I hardly noticed what went on around me. My normal daily interactions passed by in a blur, but *buddho* was always sharply in focus. My commitment to the meditation-word was total. With this firm foundation to bolster my practice, mental calm and concentration became so unshakable that they felt as solid and unyielding as a mountain.

Eventually this rock-solid condition of the mind became the primary point of focus for mindfulness. As the *citta* steadily gained greater inner stability, resulting in a higher degree of integration,

the meditation-word *buddho* gradually faded from awareness, leaving the calm and concentrated state of the mind's essential knowing nature to be perceived prominently on its own. By that stage, the mind had advanced to *samādhi*—an intense state of focused awareness, assuming a life of its own, independent of any meditation technique. Fully calm and unified, the knowing presence itself became the sole focus of attention, a condition of mind so prominent and powerful that nothing else can arise to dislodge it. This is known as the mind being in a state of continuous *samādhi.* In other words, the *citta* is *samādhi*—both are one and the same.

Speaking in terms of the deeper levels of meditation practice, a fundamental difference exists between a state of meditative calm and the *samādhi* state. When the mind converges and drops into a calm, concentrated state to remain for a period of time before withdrawing to normal consciousness, this is known as meditative calm. The calm and concentration are temporary conditions that last while the mind remains fixed in that peaceful state. As normal consciousness returns, these extraordinary conditions gradually dissipate. However, as the meditator becomes more adept at this practice—entering into and withdrawing from a calm, unified state over and over again—the mind begins to build a solid inner foundation. When this foundation becomes unshakable in all circumstances, the mind is known to be in a state of continuous *samādhi.* Then, even when the mind withdraws from meditative calm it still feels solid and compact, as though nothing can disturb its inward focus.

The *citta* that is continuously unified in *samādhi* is always even and unperturbed. It feels completely satiated. Because of the very compact and concentrated sense of inner unity, everyday thoughts and emotions no longer make an impact. In such a state, the mind has no desire to think about anything. Completely peaceful and contented within itself, nothing is felt to be lacking.

In such a state of continuous calm and concentration, the *citta* becomes very powerful. While the mind was previously hungry to experience thoughts and emotions, it now shuns them as a nuisance. Before it was so agitated that it couldn't stop thinking and imagining even if it wanted to. Now, with *samādhi* as its habitual condition, the mind feels no desire to think about anything. It views thought as an unwanted disturbance. When the mind's essential knowing presence stands out prominently all the time, the *citta* is so inwardly concentrated that it tolerates no disturbance. Because of this sublime tranquility—and the tendency of *samādhi* to lull the mind into this state of serene satisfaction—those whose minds have attained continuous *samādhi* tend to become strongly attached to it. It remains so until one reaches the level of practice where wisdom prevails, and the results become even more satisfying.

From then on I accelerated my efforts. It was at that time that I began sitting in meditation all night long, from dusk until dawn. While sitting one night I started focusing inward as usual. Because it had already developed a good, strong foundation, the *citta* easily entered into *samādhi.* So long as the *citta* rested there calmly, it remained unaware of external bodily feelings. But when I withdrew from *samādhi* many hours later I began to experience them in full. Eventually, my body was so racked by severe pain that I could hardly cope. The *citta* was suddenly unnerved, and its good, strong foundation completely collapsed. The entire body was filled with such excruciating pain that it quivered all over.

Thus began the bout of hand-to-hand combat that gave me insight into an important meditation technique. Until the unexpected appearance that night of such severe pain, I had not thought of trying to sit all night. I had never made a resolution of that kind. I was simply practicing seated meditation as I normally

did, but when the pain began to overwhelm me, I thought: "Hey, what's going on here? I must make every effort to figure out this pain tonight." So I made the solemn resolve that no matter what happened I would not get up from my seat until dawn of the next day. I was determined to investigate the nature of pain until I understood it clearly and distinctly. I would have to dig deep. But, if need be, I was willing to die in order to find out the truth about pain.

Wisdom began to tackle this problem in earnest. Before I found myself cornered like that with no way out, I never imagined that wisdom could be so sharp and incisive. It went to work, relentlessly whirling around as it probed into the source of the pain with the determination of a warrior who never retreats or accepts defeat. This experience convinced me that in moments of real crisis wisdom arises to meet the challenge. We are not fated to be ignorant forever—when truly backed into a corner we are bound to be able to find a way to help ourselves. It happened to me that night. When I was cornered and overwhelmed by severe pain, mindfulness and wisdom just dug into the painful feelings.

The pain began as hot flashes along the backs of my hands and feet, but that was really quite mild. When it arose in full force, the entire body was ablaze with pain. All the bones, and the joints connecting them, were like fuel feeding the fire that engulfed the body. It felt as though every bone in my body was breaking apart; as though my neck would snap and my head drop to the floor. When all parts of the body hurt at once, the pain is so intense that one doesn't know how to begin stemming the tide long enough just to breathe.

This crisis left mindfulness and wisdom with no alternative but to dig down into the pain, searching for the exact spot where it felt most severe. Mindfulness and wisdom probed and investigated right where the pain was greatest, trying to isolate it so as to see it clearly. "Where does this pain originate? Who suffers the

pain?" They asked these questions of each bodily part and found that each one of them remained in keeping with its own intrinsic nature. The skin was skin, the flesh was flesh, the tendons were tendons, and so forth. They had been so from the day of birth. Pain, on the other hand, is something that comes and goes periodically; it's not always there in the same way that flesh and skin are. Ordinarily, the pain and the body appear to be all bound up together. But are they really?

Focusing inward I could see that each part of the body was a physical reality. What is real stays that way. As I searched the mass of bodily pain, I saw that one point was more severe than all the others. If pain and body are one, and all parts of the body are equally real, then why was the pain stronger in one part than in another? So I tried to separate out and isolate each aspect. At that point in the investigation, mindfulness and wisdom were indispensable. They had to sweep through the areas that hurt and then whirl around the most intense ones, always working to separate the feeling from the body. Having observed the body, they quickly shifted their attention to the pain, then to the *citta.* These three: body, pain and *citta,* are the major principles in this investigation.

Although the bodily pain was obviously very strong, I could see that the *citta* was calm and unafflicted. No matter how much discomfort the body suffered, the *citta* was not distressed or agitated. This intrigued me. Normally the *kilesas* join forces with pain, and this alliance causes the *citta* to be disturbed by the body's suffering. This prompted wisdom to probe into the nature of the body, the nature of pain and the nature of the *citta* until all three were perceived clearly as separate realities, each true in its own natural sphere.

I saw clearly that it was the *citta* that defined feeling as being painful and unpleasant. Otherwise, pain was merely a natural phenomenon that occurred. It was not an integral part of the body, nor was it intrinsic to the *citta.* As soon as this principle

became absolutely clear, the pain vanished in an instant. At that moment, the body was simply the body—a separate reality on its own. Pain was simply feeling, and in a flash that feeling vanished straight into the *citta.* As soon as the pain vanished into the *citta,* the *citta* knew that the pain had disappeared. It just vanished without a trace.

In addition, the entire physical body vanished from awareness. At that moment I was not consciously aware of the body at all. Only a simple and harmonious awareness remained, alone on its own. That's all. The *citta* was so exceedingly refined as to be indescribable. It simply knew—a profoundly subtle inner state of awareness pervaded. The body had completely disappeared. Although my physical form still sat in meditation, I was completely unconscious of it. The pain too had disappeared. No physical feelings were left at all. Only the *citta's* essential knowing nature remained. All thinking had stopped; the mind was not forming a single thought. When thinking ceases, not the slightest movement disturbs the inner stillness. Unwavering, the *citta* remains firmly fixed in its own solitude.

Due to the power of mindfulness and wisdom, the hot, searing pain that afflicted my body had vanished completely. Even my body had disappeared from consciousness. The knowing presence existed alone, as though suspended in midair. It was totally empty, but at the same time vibrantly aware. Because the physical elements did not interact with it, the *citta* had no sense that the body existed. This knowing presence was a pure and solitary awareness that was not connected to anything whatsoever. It was awesome, majestic and truly magnificent.

It was an incredibly amazing experience. The pain was completely gone. The body had disappeared. An awareness so fine and subtle that I cannot describe it was the only thing not to disappear. It simply appeared, that's all I can say. It was a truly amazing inner state of being. There was no movement—not even the slightest rippling—inside the *citta.* It remained fully ab-

sorbed in stillness until enough time had elapsed, then it stirred as it began to withdraw from *samādhi.* It rippled briefly and then went quiet again.

This rippling happens naturally of its own accord. It cannot be intended. Any intention brings the *citta* right back to normal consciousness. When the *citta* absorbed in stillness has had enough, it begins to stir. It is aware that a ripple stirs briefly and then ceases. Some moments later it ripples briefly again, disappearing in the same instant. Gradually, the rippling becomes more and more frequent. When the *citta* has converged to the very base of *samādhi,* it does not withdraw all at once. This was very evident to me. The *citta* rippled only slightly, meaning that a *sankhāra* formed briefly only to disappear before it could become intelligible. Having rippled, it just vanished. Again and again it rippled and vanished, gradually increasing in frequency until my *citta* eventually returned to ordinary consciousness. I then became aware of my physical presence, but the pain was still gone. Initially I felt no pain at all, and only slowly did it begin to reappear.

This experience reinforced the solid spiritual foundation in my heart with an unshakable certainty. I had realized a basic principle in contending with pain: pain, body and *citta* are all distinctly separate phenomena. But because of a single mental defilement—delusion—they all converge into one. Delusion pervades the *citta* like an insidious poison, contaminating our perceptions and distorting the truth. Pain is simply a natural phenomenon that occurs on its own. But when we grab hold of it as a burning discomfort, it immediately becomes hot—because our defining it in that way makes it hot.

After awhile the pain returned, so I had to tackle it again—without retreating. I probed deep into the painful feelings, investigating them as I had done before. But this time I could not use the same investigative techniques that I had previously used to such good effect. Techniques employed in the past were no lon-

ger relevant to the present moment. In order to keep pace with internal events as they unfolded I needed fresh tactics, newly devised by mindfulness and wisdom and tailor-made for present circumstances. The nature of the pain was still the same, but the tactics had to be suitable to the immediate conditions. Even though I had used them successfully once before, I could not remedy the new situation by holding on to old investigative techniques. Fresh, innovative techniques were required, ones devised in the heat of battle to deal with present-moment conditions. Mindfulness and wisdom went to work anew, and before long the *citta* once again converged to the very base of *samādhi.*

During the course of that night the *citta* converged like this three times, but I had to engage in bouts of hand-to-hand combat each time. After the third time, dawn came, bringing to a close that decisive showdown. The *citta* emerged bold, exultant and utterly fearless. Fear of death ceased that night.

Painful feelings are just naturally occurring phenomena that constantly fluctuate between mild and severe. As long as we do not make them into a personal burden, they don't have any special meaning for the *citta.* In and of itself, pain means nothing, so the *citta* remains unaffected. The physical body is also meaningless in and of itself, and it adds no meaning either to feelings or to oneself—unless, of course, the *citta* invests it with a specific meaning, gathering in the resultant suffering to burn itself. External conditions are not really responsible for our suffering, only the *citta* can create that.

Getting up that morning, I felt indescribably bold and daring. I marveled at the amazing nature of my experience. Nothing comparable had ever happened in my meditation before. The *citta* had completely severed its connection with all objects of attention, converging inward with true courage. It had converged into that majestic stillness because of my thorough, painstaking

investigations. When it withdrew, it was still full of an audacious courage that knew no fear of death. I now knew the right investigative techniques, so I was certain that I'd have no fear the next time that pain appeared. It would, after all, be pain with just the same characteristics. The physical body would be the same old body. And wisdom would be the same faculty I'd used before. For this reason, I felt openly defiant, without fear of pain or death.

Once wisdom had come to realize the true nature of what dies and what does not, death became something quite ordinary. Hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, bones: reduced to their original elemental form, they are simply the earth element. Since when did the earth element ever die? When they decompose and disintegrate, what do they become? All parts of the body revert to their original properties. The earth and water elements revert to their original properties, as do the wind and fire elements. Nothing is annihilated. Those elements have simply come together to form a lump in which the *citta* then takes up residence. The *citta*—the great master of delusion—comes in and animates it, and then carries the entire burden by making a self-identity out of it. "This is me, this belongs to me." Reserving the whole mass for itself, the *citta* accumulates endless amounts of pain and suffering, burning itself with its own false assumptions.

The *citta* itself is the real culprit, not the lump of physical elements. The body is not some hostile entity whose constant fluctuations threaten our well-being. It is a separate reality that changes naturally according to its own inherent conditions. Only when we make false assumptions about it does it become a burden we must carry. That is precisely why we suffer from bodily pain and discomfort. The physical body does not produce suffering for us; we ourselves produce it. Thus I saw clearly that no external conditions can cause us to suffer. We are the ones who misconceive things, and that misconception creates the blaze of pain that troubles our hearts.

I understood clearly that nothing dies. The *citta* certainly doesn't die; in fact, it becomes more pronounced. The more fully we investigate the four elements, breaking them down into their original properties, the more distinctly pronounced the *citta* appears. So where is death to be found? And what is it that dies? The four elements—earth, water, wind and fire—they don't die. As for the *citta,* how can it die? It becomes more conspicuous, more aware and more insightful. This essential knowing nature never dies, so why is it so afraid of death? Because it deceives itself. For eons and eons it has fooled itself into believing in death when actually nothing ever dies.

So when pain arises in the body we must realize that it is merely feeling, and nothing else. Don't define it in personal terms and assume that it is something happening to you. Pains have afflicted your body since the day you were born. The pain that you experienced at the moment you emerged from your mother's womb was excruciating. Only by surviving such torment are human beings born. Pain has been there from the very beginning and it's not about to reverse course or alter its character. Bodily pain always exhibits the same basic characteristics: having arisen, it remains briefly and then ceases. Arising, remaining briefly, ceasing—that's all there is to it.

Investigate painful feelings arising in the body so as to see them clearly for what they are. The body itself is merely a physical form, the physical reality you have known since birth. But when you believe that you are your body, and your body hurts, then you are in pain. Being equated, body, pain and the awareness that perceives them then converge into one: your painful body. Physical pain arises due to some bodily malfunction. It arises dependent on some aspect of the body, but it is not itself a physical phenomenon. Awareness of both body and feelings is dependent on the *citta*—the one who knows them. But when the one who's aware of them knows them falsely, then concern about the physical cause of the pain and its apparent intensity

cause emotional pain to arise. Pain not only hurts but it indicates that there is something wrong with you—your body. Unless you can separate out these three distinct realities, physical pain will always cause emotional distress.

The body is merely a physical phenomenon. We can believe whatever we like about it, but that will not alter fundamental principles of truth. Physical existence is one such fundamental truth. Four elemental properties—earth, water, wind and fire—gather together in a certain configuration to form what is called a "person". This physical presence may be identified as a man or a woman and be given a specific name and social status, but essentially it is just the *rūpa khandha*—a physical heap. Lumped together, all the constituent parts form a human body, a distinct physical reality. And each separate part is an integral part of that one fundamental reality. The four elements join together in many different ways. In the human body we speak of the skin, the flesh, the tendons, the bones, and so forth. But don't be fooled into thinking of them as separate realities simply because they have different names. See them all as one essential reality—the physical heap.

As for the heap of feelings, they exist in their own sphere. They are not part of the physical body. The body isn't feeling either. It has no direct part in physical pain. These two *khandhas*—body and feeling—are more prominent than the *khandhas* of memory, thought and consciousness, which, because they vanish as soon as they arise, are far more difficult to see. Feelings, on the other hand, remain briefly before they vanish. This causes them to standout, making them easier to isolate during meditation.

Focus directly on painful feelings when they arise and strive to understand their true nature. Confront the challenge head on. Don't try to avoid the pain by focusing your attention elsewhere. And resist any temptation to wish for the pain to go away. The purpose of the investigation must be a search for true understanding. The neutralization of pain is merely a by-product of the

clear understanding of the principles of truth. It cannot be taken as the primary objective. That will only create the conditions for greater emotional stress when the relief one wishes for fails to materialize. Stoic endurance in the face of intense pain will not succeed either. Nor will concentrating single-mindedly on pain to the exclusion of the body and the *citta.* In order to achieve the proper results, all three factors must be included in the investigation. The investigation must always be direct and purposeful.

THE LORD BUDDHA TAUGHT US to investigate with the aim of seeing all pain as simply a phenomenon that arises, remains briefly and then vanishes. Don't become entangled in it. Don't view the pain in personal terms, as an inseparable part of who you are, for that runs counter to pain's true nature. It also undermines the techniques used to investigate pain, preventing wisdom from knowing the reality of feelings. Don't create a problem for yourself where none exists. See the truth as it arises in each moment of pain, observing as it remains briefly and vanishes. That's all there is to pain.

When you have used mindfulness and wisdom to isolate the painful feeling, turn your attention to the *citta* and compare the feeling with the awareness that knows it to see if they really are inseparable. Turn and compare the *citta* and the physical body in the same manner: are they in any way identical? Focus clearly on each one and don't allow your concentration to wander from the specific point you are investigating. Keep it firmly fixed on the one aspect. For instance, focus your full attention on the pain and analyze it until you understand its distinguishing characteristics; then turn to look at the *citta* and strive to see its knowing nature distinctly. Are the two identical? Compare them. Are the feeling and the awareness that knows it one and the same thing? Is there any way to make them so? And the body, does it share similar characteristics with the *citta*? Is it like the feeling? Are any of these three similar enough to be lumped together?

The body is physical matter—how can it be likened to the *citta?* The *citta* is a mental phenomenon, an awareness that knows. The physical elements that make up the body have no intrinsic awareness, they have no capacity to know. The earth, water, wind and fire elements know nothing; only the mental element—the *manodhātu*—knows. This being the case, how can the *citta's* essential knowing nature and the body's physical elements possibly be equated. They are obviously separate realities.

The same principle applies to pain. It has no intrinsic awareness, no capacity to know. Pain is a natural phenomenon that arises in conjunction with the body, but it is unaware of the existence of the body or of itself. Painful feelings depend on the body as their physical basis. Without the body they could not occur. But they have no physical reality of their own. Sensations that arise in conjunction with the body are interpreted in such a way that they become indistinguishable from the area of the body that is affected. Instinctively, body and pain are equated, so the body itself seems to hurt. We must remedy this instinctive reaction by investigating both the characteristics of pain as a sense phenomenon and the purely physical characteristics of that part of the body where that pain is felt acutely. The objective is to determine clearly whether or not the physical location—say a knee joint—exhibits the distinctive characteristics associated with pain. What kind of shape and posture do they have? Feelings have no shape or posture. They occur simply as an amorphous sensation. The body does have a definite shape, color and complexion, and these are not changed by the occurrence of physical feelings. It remains just the same as it was before pain arose. The physical substance is in no way altered by pain because pain, being a separate reality, has no direct effect on it.

For instance, when a knee hurts or a muscle hurts: knee and muscle are merely bone, ligament and flesh. They themselves are not pain. Although the two dwell together, they retain their own separate characteristics. The *citta* knows both of these things but,

because its awareness is clouded by delusion, it automatically assumes that the pain is mixed in with the bones, ligaments and muscles that compose a knee joint. By reason of that same fundamental ignorance, the *citta* assumes that the body in all of its aspects is an integral part of one's very being. So the pain too becomes bound up with one's sense of being. "My knee hurts. I am in pain. But I don't want to suffer pain. I want the pain to go away." This desire to get rid of pain is a *kilesa* that increases the level of discomfort by turning physical feeling into emotional suffering. The stronger the pain is, the stronger the desire to rid oneself of it becomes, which leads to greater emotional distress. These factors keep feeding each other. Thus, due to our own ignorance, we load ourselves down with *dukkha.*

In order to see pain, body and *citta* as separate realities we must view each from the proper perspective, a perspective that allows them to float freely instead of coalescing into one. While they are bound together as part of our self-image there is no independent viewpoint, and therefore no effective means to separate them apart. As long as we insist on regarding pain in personal terms, it will be impossible to breach this impasse. When the *khandhas* and the *citta* are merged into one, we have no room to maneuver. But when we investigate them with mindfulness and wisdom, moving back and forth between them, analyzing each and comparing their specific features, we notice definite distinctions among them and so see their true natures clearly. Each exists on its own as a separate reality. This is a universal principle.

As the profound nature of this realization sinks deep into the heart, the pain begins to abate and gradually fades away. At the same time we realize the fundamental connection between the experience of pain and the "self" that grasps it. That connection is established from inside the *citta* and extends outwardly to include the pain and the body. The actual experience of pain emanates from the *citta* and its deep-seated attachment to self, which causes emotional pain to arise in response to physical pain. Fully

aware the whole time, we follow the feeling of pain inward to its source. As we focus on it, the pain we are investigating begins to retract, gradually drawing back into the heart. Once we realize unequivocally that it is actually the attachment created by the heart that causes us to experience pain as a personal problem, the pain disappears. It may disappear completely, leaving only the essential knowing nature of the *citta* alone on its own. Or, the external phenomenon of pain may remain present but, because the emotional attachment has been neutralized, it is no longer experienced as painful. It is a different order of reality from the *citta,* and the two do not interact. Since at that moment the *citta* has ceased to grasp at pain, all connection has been severed. What's left is the essence of the *citta*—its knowing nature—serene and unperturbed amidst the pain of the *khandhas.*

No matter how severe the pain may be at that time, it will be unable to affect the *citta* in any way. Once wisdom realizes clearly that the *citta* and the pain are each real, but real in their own separate ways, the two will not impact one another at all. The body is merely a lump of physical matter. The same body that was there when the pain appeared is still there when the pain ceases. Pain does not alter the nature of the body; the body does not affect the nature of pain. The *citta* is the nature that knows that the pain appears, remains briefly, and ceases. But the *citta,* the true knowing essence, does not arise and pass away like the body and the feelings do. The *citta's* knowing presence is the one stable constant.

This being the case, pain—no matter how great—has no impact on the *citta.* You can even smile while severe pain is arising—you can smile!—because the *citta* is separate. It constantly knows but it does not become involved with feelings so it does not suffer.

This level is attained through an intensive application of mindfulness and wisdom. It's a stage where wisdom develops *samādhi.* And because the *citta* has fully investigated all aspects until they

are understood thoroughly, the *citta* reaches the full extent of *samādhi* at that time. It converges with a boldness and subtlety so profound as to defy description. This amazing awareness comes from analyzing things completely and exhaustively and then withdrawing from them. Ordinarily, when the *citta* relies on the power of *samādhi* meditation to converge into a calm, concentrated state, it becomes still and quiet. But that *samādhi* state is not nearly so subtle and profound as the one attained through the power of wisdom. Once mindfulness and wisdom have engaged the *kilesas* in hand-to-hand combat and triumphed, the nature of the calm that's attained will be spectacular each time.

This is the path for those who are practicing meditation so as to penetrate to the truth of the five *khandhas,* using painful feeling as the primary focus. This practice formed the initial basis for my fearlessness in meditation. I saw with unequivocal clarity that the essential knowing nature of the *citta* could never possibly be annihilated. Even if everything else were completely destroyed, the *citta* would remain wholly unaffected. I realized this truth with absolute clarity the moment when the *citta's* knowing essence stood alone on its own, completely uninvolved with anything whatsoever. There was only that knowing presence standing out prominently, awesome in its splendor. The *citta* lets go of the body, feeling, memory, thought and consciousness and enters a pure stillness of its very own, with absolutely no connection to the *khandhas.* In that moment, the five *khandhas* do not function in any way at all in relation to the *citta.* In other words, the *citta* and the *khandhas* exist independently because they have been completely cut off from one another due to the persistent efforts of meditation.

That attainment brings a sense of wonder and amazement that no experience we've ever had could possibly equal. The *citta* stays suspended in a serene stillness for a long time before withdrawing to normal consciousness. Having withdrawn, it reconnects with the *khandhas* as before, but it remains absolutely

convinced that the *citta* has just attained a state of extraordinary calm totally cut off from the five *khandhas.* It knows that it has experienced an extremely amazing spiritual state of being. *That certainty will never be erased.*

Due to that unshakable conviction, which became fixed in my heart as a result of that experience and therefore could not be brought into doubt by unfounded or unreasonable assertions, I resumed my earlier *samādhi* meditation in earnest—this time with an added determination and a sense of absorption stemming from the magnetic pull that this certainty has in the heart. The *citta* was quick to converge into the calm and concentration of *samādhi* as before. Although I could not yet release the *citta* completely from the infiltration of the five *khandhas,* I was greatly inspired to make a persistent effort to reach the higher levels of Dhamma.

NO MATTER HOW DEEP OR CONTINUOUS, *samādhi* is not an end in itself. *Samādhi* does not bring about an end to all suffering. But *samādhi* does constitute an ideal platform from which to launch an all out assault on the *kilesas* that cause all suffering. The profound calm and concentration generated by *samādhi* form an excellent basis for the development of wisdom.

The problem is that *samādhi* is so peaceful and satisfying that the meditator inadvertently becomes addicted to it. This happened to me: for five years I was addicted to the tranquility of *samādhi;* so much so that I came to believe that this very tranquility was the essence of Nibbāna. Only when my teacher, Ācariya Mun, forced me to confront this misconception, was I able to move on to the practice of wisdom.

Unless it supports the development of wisdom, *samādhi* can sidetrack a meditator from the path to the end of all suffering. All meditators who intensify their efforts to develop *samādhi* should be aware of this pitfall. *Samādhi's* main function on the path of

practice is to support and sustain the development of wisdom. It is well suited to this task because a mind that is calm and concentrated is fully satisfied, and does not seek external distractions. Thoughts about sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and tactile sensations no longer impinge upon an awareness that is firmly fixed in *samādhi.* Calm and concentration are the mind's natural sustenance. Once it becomes satiated with its favorite nourishment, it does not wander off where it strays into idle thinking. It is now fully prepared to undertake the kind of purposeful thinking, investigation and reflection that constitute the practice of wisdom. If the mind has yet to settle down—if it still hankers after sense impressions, if it still wants to chase after thoughts and emotions—its investigations will never lead to true wisdom. They will lead only to discursive thought, guesswork and speculation—unfounded interpretations of reality based simply on what has been learned and remembered. Instead of leading to wisdom, and the cessation of suffering, such directionless thinking becomes *samudaya*—the primary cause of suffering.

Since its sharp, inward focus complements the investigative and contemplative work of wisdom so well, the Lord Buddha taught us to first develop *samādhi.* A mind that remains undistracted by peripheral thoughts and emotions is able to focus exclusively on whatever arises in its field of awareness and to investigate such phenomena in light of the truth without the interference of guesswork or speculation. This is an important principle. The investigation proceeds smoothly, with fluency and skill. This is the nature of genuine wisdom: investigating, contemplating and understanding, but never being distracted or misled by conjecture.

The practice of wisdom begins with the human body, the grossest and most visible component of our personal identity. The object is to penetrate the reality of its true nature. Is our body what we've always assumed it to be—an integral and desirable part of who we really are? To test this assumption we must

thoroughly investigate the body by mentally deconstructing it into its constituent parts, section by section, piece by piece. We must research the truth about the body with which we are so familiar by viewing it from different angles. Begin with the hair on the head, the hair on the body, the nails, the teeth and the skin, and move on to the flesh, blood, sinews and bones. Then dissect the inner organs, one by one, until the whole body is completely dismembered. Analyze this conglomeration of disparate parts to clearly understand its true nature.

If you find it difficult to investigate your own body in this way, begin by mentally dissecting someone else's body. Choose a body external to yourself; for instance, a body of the opposite sex. Visualize each part, each organ of that body as best you can, and ask yourself: Which piece is truly attractive? Which part is actually seductive? Place the hair in one pile, the nails and teeth in another; do the same with the skin, the flesh, the sinews and the bones. Which pile deserves to be an object of your desire? Examine them closely and answer with total honesty. Strip off the skin and pile it in front of you. Where is the beauty in this mass of tissue, this thin veneer that covers up the meat and entrails? Do those various parts add up to a person? Once the skin is removed, what can we find to admire in the human body? Men and women—they are all the same. Not a shred of beauty can be found in the body of a human being. It is just a bag of flesh and blood and bones that manages to deceive everyone in the world into lusting after it.

It is wisdom's duty to expose that deception. Examine the skin carefully. Skin is the great deceiver. Because it wraps up the entire human body, it's the part we always see. But what does it wrap up? It wraps up the animal flesh, the muscles, the fluids and the fat. It wraps up the skeleton with the tendons and the sinews. It wraps up the liver, the kidneys, the stomach, the intestines, and all the internal organs. No one has ever suggested that the body's innards are desirable things of beauty, worthy of being ad-

mired with passion and yearning. Probing deeply, without fear or hesitation, wisdom exposes the plain truth about the body. Don't be fooled by a thin veil of scaly tissue. Peel it off and see what lies underneath. This is the practice of wisdom.

In order to really see the truth of this matter for yourself, in a clear and precise way that leaves no room for doubt, you must be very persistent and very diligent. Merely doing this meditation practice once or twice, or from time to time, will not be enough to bring conclusive results. You must approach the practice as if it's your life's work—as though nothing else in the world matters except the analysis you are working on at that moment. Time is not a factor; place is not a factor; ease and comfort are not factors. Regardless of how long it takes or how difficult the work proves to be, you must relentlessly stick with body contemplation until all doubt and uncertainty are eliminated.

Body contemplation should occupy every breath, every thought, every movement until the mind becomes thoroughly saturated with it. Nothing short of total commitment will bring genuine and direct insight into the truth. When body contemplation is practiced with single-minded intensity, each successive body part becomes a kind of fuel feeding the fires of mindfulness and wisdom. Mindfulness and wisdom then become a conflagration consuming the human body section by section, part by part, as they examine and investigate the truth with a burning intensity. This is what is meant by *tapadhamma.*

Focus intently on those body parts that really capture your attention, the ones whose truth feels most obvious to you. Use them as whetstones to sharpen your wisdom. Expose them and tear them apart until their inherently disgusting and repulsive nature becomes apparent. *Asubha* meditation is insight into the repulsiveness of the human body. This is the body's natural condition; by nature, it is filthy and disgusting. Essentially, the whole body is a living, stinking corpse—a breathing cesspool full of fetid waste. Only a paper thin covering of skin makes the whole mess

look presentable. We are all being deceived by the outer wrapping, which conceals the fundamental repulsiveness from view. Merely removing the skin reveals the body's true nature.

By comparison to the flesh and internal organs, the skin appears attractive. But examine it more closely. Skin is scaly, creased, and wrinkled; it exudes sweat and grease and offensive odors. We must scrub it daily just to keep it clean. How attractive is that? And the skin is firmly wedded to the underlying flesh, and thus inextricably linked to the loathsome interior. The more deeply wisdom probes, the more repulsive the body appears. From the skin on through to the bones, nothing is the least bit pleasing.

Properly done, body contemplation is intense and the mental effort is unrelenting; so, eventually, the mind begins to tire. It is then appropriate to stop and take a rest. When meditators who are engaged in full-scale body contemplation take a break, they return to the *samādhi* practice they have developed and maintained so assiduously. Reentering the still peace and concentration of *samādhi,* they abide in total calm where no thoughts or visualizations arise to disturb the *citta.* The burden of thinking and probing with wisdom is temporarily set aside so that the mind can completely relax, suspended in tranquility. Once the mind is satiated with *samādhi,* it withdraws on its own, feeling reinvigorated and refreshed and ready to tackle the rigors of body contemplation again. In this way, *samādhi* supports the work of wisdom, making it more adept and incisive.

Upon withdrawal from *samādhi,* the investigation of the body immediately begins anew. Each time you investigate with mindfulness and wisdom, the investigation should be carried out in the present moment. To be fully effective, each new investigation must be fresh and spontaneous. Don't allow them to become carbon copies of previous ones. An immediacy, of being exclusively in the present moment, must be maintained at all times. Forget

whatever you may have learned; forget what happened the last time you delved into the body's domain—just focus your attention squarely in the present moment and investigate only from that vantage point. Ultimately, this is what it means to be mindful. Mindfulness fixes the mind in the present, allowing wisdom to focus sharply. Learned experience is stored as memory, and as such should be put aside; otherwise memory will masquerade as wisdom. This is the present imitating the past. If memory is permitted to replace the immediacy of the present moment, then genuine wisdom will not arise. So guard against this tendency in your practice.

Keep probing and analyzing the nature of the body over and over again, using as many perspectives as your wisdom can devise, until you become thoroughly skilled in every conceivable aspect of body contemplation. True expertise in this practice produces sharp, clear insights. It penetrates directly to the essence of the body's natural existence in a way that transforms the meditator's view of the human body. A level of mastery can be reached, such that peoples' bodies instantly appear to break apart whenever you look at them. When wisdom attains total mastery of the practice, we see only flesh, sinews and bones where a person once stood. The whole body is revealed as a viscous, red mass of raw tissue. The skin will vanish in a flash, and wisdom will quickly penetrate the body's inner recesses. Whether it's a man or a woman, the skin—which is commonly considered so appealing—is simply ignored. Wisdom penetrates immediately inside where a disgusting, repulsive mess of organs and bodily fluids fills every cavity.

Wisdom is able to penetrate to the truth of the body with utmost clarity. The attractiveness of the body completely disappears. What then is there to be attached to? What is there to lust after? What in the body is worth clinging to? Where in this lump of raw flesh is the person? The *kilesas* have woven a web of deception concerning the body, fooling us with perceptions of human beauty and exciting us with lustful thoughts. The truth

is that the object of that desire is a fake—a complete fraud. For in reality, when seen clearly with wisdom, the body by its very nature repels desire. When this delusion is exposed in the light of wisdom, the human body appears in all its gory detail as an appalling sight. Seen with absolute clarity, the mind shrinks from it instantly.

The keys to success are persistence and perseverance. Always be diligent and alert when applying mindfulness and wisdom to the task. Don't be satisfied with partial success. Each time you contemplate the body, carry that investigation through to its logical conclusion; then quickly reestablish an image of the body in your mind and begin the process all over again. As you delve deeper and deeper into the body's interior, the various parts will gradually begin to break up, fall apart, and disintegrate right before your eyes. Follow the process of disintegration and decay intently. Mindful of every detail, focus your wisdom on the unstable and impermanent nature of this form that the world views with such infatuation. Let your intuitive wisdom initiate the process of decay and see what happens. This is the next stage in body contemplation.

Follow the natural conditions of decay as the body decomposes and returns to its original elemental state. Decay and destruction is the natural course of all organic life. Eventually, all things are reduced to their constituent elements, and those elements disperse. Let wisdom be the destroyer, imagining for the mind's eye the process of decay and decomposition. Concentrate on the disintegration of the flesh and other soft tissue, watching as it slowly decomposes until nothing remains but disjointed bones. Then reconstruct the body again and begin the investigation once more. Each time that intuitive wisdom lays waste to the body, mentally restore it to its former condition and start anew.

This practice is an intense form of mental training, requiring a high degree of skill and mental fortitude. The rewards reflect the power and intensity of the effort made. The more proficient

wisdom is, the brighter, clearer and more powerful the mind becomes. The mind's clarity and strength appear to have no bounds—its speed and agility are amazing. At this stage, meditators are motivated by a profound sense of urgency as they begin to realize the harm caused by attachment to the human form. The lurking danger is clearly seen.

Where previously they grasped the body as something of supreme value—something to be admired and adored—they now see only a pile of rotting bone; and they are thoroughly repulsed. Through the power of wisdom, a dead, decaying body and the living, breathing body have become one and the same corpse. Not a shred of difference exists between them.

You must investigate repeatedly, training the mind until you become highly proficient at using wisdom. Avoid any form of speculation or conjecture. Don't allow thoughts of what you *should* be doing or what the results *might* mean to encroach upon the investigation. Just concentrate on the truth of what wisdom reveals and let the truth speak for itself. Wisdom will know the correct path to follow and will understand clearly the truths that it uncovers. And when wisdom is fully convinced of the truth of any aspect of the body, it will naturally release its attachment to that aspect. No matter how intently it has pursued that investigation, the mind feels fully satisfied once the truth manifests itself with absolute certainty. When the truth of one facet of body contemplation is realized, there is nothing further to seek in that direction. So, the mind moves on to examine another facet, and then another facet, until finally all doubts are eliminated.

Striving in this way, probing deeper and deeper into the body's inherent nature with an intense focus on the present moment, a heightened state of awareness must be maintained; and the intensity of the effort eventually takes its toll. When fatigue sets in, experienced meditators know instinctively that the time is right to rest the mind in *samādhi.* So they drop all aspects of the investigation and concentrate solely on one object. Totally unburden-

ing themselves, they enter into the cool, composed, rejuvenating peace of *samādhi.* In this way, *samādhi* is a separate practice altogether. No thoughts of any kind infringe upon the *citta's* essential knowing nature while it rests peacefully with single-minded concentration. With the *citta* absorbed in total stillness, the body and the external world temporarily disappear from awareness. Once the *citta* is satiated, it withdraws to normal consciousness on its own. Like a person who eats a full meal and takes a good rest, mindfulness and wisdom are refreshed and ready to return to work with renewed energy. Then, with purposeful resolve, the practice of *samādhi* is put aside and the practice of wisdom is re-established. In this way, *samādhi* is an outstanding complement to wisdom.

THE BODY IS VERY IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER. Most of our desires are bound up with it. Looking around us, we can see a world that is in the grips of sexual craving and frantic in its adoration of the human form. As meditators, we must face up to the challenges posed by our own sexuality, which stems from a deep-seated craving for sensual gratification. During meditation, this defilement is the most significant obstacle to our progress. The deeper we dig into body contemplation, the more evident this becomes. No other form of *kilesa* drags more on the mind, nor exerts greater power over the mind than the defilement of sexual craving. Since this craving is rooted in the human body, exposing its true nature will gradually loosen the mind's tenacious grasp on the body.

Body contemplation is the best antidote for sexual attraction. Successful body practice is measured by a reduction in the mind's sexual desires. Step by step, wisdom unmasks the reality of the body, cutting off and destroying deep-rooted attachments in the process. This results in an increasingly free and open mental state. To fully understand their significance, meditators must experience these results for themselves. It would be counter-pro-

ductive for me to try to describe them—that would only lead to fruitless speculation. These results arise exclusively within a meditator's mind, and are unique to that person's character and temperament. Simply focus all your attention on the practical causes and let the results of that effort arise as they will. When they do, you will know them with undeniable clarity. This is a natural principle.

When body contemplation reaches the stage where reason and result become fully integrated with wisdom, one becomes completely absorbed in these investigations both day and night. It's truly extraordinary. Wisdom moves through the body with such speed and agility, and displays such ingenuity in its contemplative techniques, that it seems to spin relentlessly in and out and around every part, every aspect of the body, delving into each nook and cranny to discover the truth. At this stage of the practice, wisdom begins to surface automatically, becoming truly habitual in manifesting itself. Because it's so quick and incisive, it can catch up with even the most subtle *kilesas,* and disable even the most indomitable ones. Wisdom at this level is extremely daring and adventurous. It is like a mountain torrent crashing through a narrow canyon: nothing can deter its course. Wisdom bursts forth to meet every challenge to crave and to cling that is presented by the *kilesas.* Because its adversary is so tenacious, wisdom's battle with sexual craving resembles a full-scale war. For this reason, only a bold and uncompromising strategy will succeed. There is only one appropriate course of action—an all out struggle; and the meditator will know this instinctively.

When wisdom begins to master the body, it will constantly modify its investigative techniques so that it will not fall prey to the tricks of the *kilesas.* Wisdom will try to keep one step ahead of the *kilesas,* constantly looking for new openings and constantly adjusting its tactics: sometimes shifting emphasis, sometimes pursuing subtle variations in technique.

As greater and greater proficiency is achieved, there comes a time when all attachment to one's own body and to that of others appears to have vanished. In truth, a lingering attachment still remains; it has only gone into hiding. It has not been totally eliminated. Take careful note of this. It may feel as though it is eliminated, but actually it is concealed from view by the power of the *asubha* practice. So don't be complacent. Keep upgrading your arsenal—mindfulness, wisdom and diligence—to meet the challenge. Mentally place the whole mass of body parts in front of you and focus on it intently. This is your body. What will happen to it? By now wisdom is so swift and decisive that in no time at all it will break up and disintegrate before your eyes. Each time you spread the body out before you—whether it is your body or someone else's—wisdom will immediately begin to break it apart and destroy it. By now this action has become habitual.

In the end, when wisdom has achieved maximum proficiency at penetrating to the core of the body's repulsive nature, you must place the entire disgusting mess of flesh and blood and bones in front of you and ask yourself: From where does this feeling of revulsion emanate? What is the real source of this repulsiveness? Concentrate on the disgusting sight before you and see what happens. You are now closing in on the truth of the matter. At this crucial stage in *asubha* contemplation, you must not allow wisdom to break the body apart and destroy it. Fix the repulsive image clearly in your mind and watch closely to detect any movement in the repulsive feeling. You have evoked a feeling of revulsion for it: Where does that feeling originate? From where does it come? Who or what assumes that flesh, blood and bones are disgusting? They are as they are, existing in their own natural state. Who is it that conjures up feelings of revulsion at their sight? Fix your attention on it. Where will the repulsiveness go? Wherever it moves, be prepared to follow its direction.

The decisive phase of body contemplation has been reached. This is the point where the root-cause of sexual craving is up-

rooted once and for all. As you focus exclusively on the repulsiveness evoked by the *asubha* contemplation, your revulsion of the image before you will slowly, gradually contract inward until it is fully absorbed by the mind. On its own, without any prompting, it will recede into the mind, returning to its source of origin. This is the decisive moment in the practice of body contemplation, the moment when a final verdict is reached about the relationship between the *kilesa* of sexual craving and its primary object, the physical body. When the mind's knowing presence fully absorbs the repulsiveness, internalizing the feeling of revulsion, a profound realization suddenly occurs: The mind itself produces feelings of revulsion, the mind itself produces feelings of attraction; the mind alone creates ugliness and the mind alone creates beauty. These qualities do not really exist in the external physical world. The mind merely projects these attributes onto the objects it perceives and then deceives itself into believing that they are beautiful or ugly, attractive or repulsive. In truth, the mind paints elaborate pictures all the time—pictures of oneself and pictures of the external world. It then falls for its own mental imagery, believing it to be real.

At this point the meditator understands the truth with absolute certainty: The mind itself generates repulsion and attraction. The previous focus of the investigation—the pile of flesh and blood and bones—has no inherent repulsiveness whatsoever. Intrinsically, the human body is neither disgusting nor pleasing. Instead, it is the mind that conjures up these feelings and then projects them on the images that are in front of us. Once wisdom penetrates this deception with absolute clarity, the mind immediately relinquishes all external perceptions of beauty and ugliness, and turns inward to concentrate on the source of such notions. The mind itself is the perpetrator and the victim of these deceptions; the deceiver and the deceived. Only the mind, and nothing else, paints pictures of beauty and ugliness. So the *asubha* images that the meditator has been focusing on as separate and

external objects, are absorbed into the mind where they merge with the revulsion created by the mind. Both are, in fact, one and the same thing. When this realization occurs, the mind lets go of external images, lets go of external forms, and in doing so lets go of sexual attraction.

Sexual attraction is rooted in perceptions of the human body. When the real basis of these perceptions is exposed, it completely undermines their validity; and the external, as we know it, collapses and our attachment to it ceases of its own accord. The defiling influence of sexual attraction—which has ridden roughshod over the mind since time immemorial, luring the mind to grasp at birth and so experience death continuously for eons—this insidious craving is now powerless. The mind has now passed beyond its influence: It is now free.

Please take this explanation as a guide, signaling the way forward, and not as a lesson to be memorized verbatim. I am always reluctant to be very specific for fear that my students will take my words literally and thus prejudge the nature of the truth that they are seeking. My words, taken as they are, will not enlighten you. Only mindful awareness, firmly anchored in the present moment, leads directly to the truth. Never presuppose the truth. Don't speculate or theorize about meditation practice. And don't mistakenly appropriate the knowledge you gain from reading this exposition, assuming that in doing so you understand the true nature of body and mind. Only clear and direct insight guided by mindfulness, investigated with wisdom, and pursued with diligence will penetrate that truth.

At this level of practice, the body is completely internalized and the power of sexual attraction is broken. To move forward to the next step, you must use the meditation technique, that brought you to this point, as a training exercise. The aim here is to train mindfulness and wisdom to be even quicker, sharper and

more precise in dealing with the very elusive and subtle nature of mental phenomena. Place the repulsive image of the body in front of you as usual and watch as it retracts into the mind. Then place the image back in front of you and start again, observing carefully how the image merges into the mind. Do this exercise repeatedly until the mind becomes very skilled at it. Once proficiency is achieved, the image will ebb away as soon as the mind focuses on it and merge with the knowing presence inside. Upon reaching the stage where one clearly understands the basic principles underlying sexual attraction, the next step is to train the mind with this purely mental exercise. Sexual attraction is no longer a problem—it has been cut off for good. There is no way that it can reappear as before. But, although most of it has been eliminated, it has yet to be completely destroyed. A small portion still remains: like bits of dross or patches of rust adhering to the mind.

At the stage where external perceptions merge totally with the *citta's* own inner image, we can say that at least fifty percent of the investigation of *kāmarāga* has been successfully completed. The final, most advanced stage of the path of practice has been reached. The subtle portion of sensual desire that remains must be gradually eliminated, using the training exercise mentioned above. Relentlessly refining the contemplation and the mental absorption of *asubha* images will increase wisdom's skill level. As wisdom's proficiency strengthens, a higher and higher percentage of sexual attraction is totally destroyed. As wisdom's mastery gathers pace, so too does the speed at which the images recede into the mind. Eventually, as soon as one focuses on it, an image will rush into the mind, merge with it and simply vanish. With constant practice, the speed at which this occurs will rapidly increase. At the highest level of skillfulness, the image will vanish the moment it's absorbed into the mind. This investigative technique is fundamental to progress in the final stage of the path, the stage where a vanquished *kāmarāga* is in full retreat. Soon every vestige of it will be destroyed.

Once the meditator attains the final stage, once the real source of ugliness and beauty is seen with crystal clarity, *kāmarāga* will never rear its head again. Its hold over the mind has been broken—and this condition is irreversible. Notwithstanding that, further work is still needed to destroy all traces of sensual desire. The task is time consuming. This part of the investigation is complex and somewhat chaotic with images of the body arising and vanishing at a furious pace. The most intense effort is required to root out every last vestige of *kāmarāga.* But the meditator knows instinctively what to do at this stage. So, the investigation quickly develops its own natural momentum without prompting from anyone.

Mindfulness and wisdom are habitual—they work in unison with extraordinary speed and agility. By the time that these investigations reach their dénouement, no sooner does an image of the body appear than it vanishes instantly. It doesn't matter whether these images merge into the *citta* or not, their appearance and disappearance is all that is known. Arising and passing images happen so quickly that perceptions of external and internal are no longer relevant. In the end, images flutter on and off, appearing and disappearing from awareness so rapidly that their forms are no longer sustainable. After each disappearance, the *citta* experiences a profound emptiness—emptiness of imagery, emptiness of form. An extremely refined awareness stands out within the *citta.* As each new image flashes on and disappears, the mind feels the resulting emptiness more profoundly. Due to its subtle and manifest strength at this stage, the *citta's* knowing nature completely dominates. Finally, images created in the mind cease to appear altogether—only emptiness remains. In this void the *citta's* essential knowing nature prevails, exclusively and incomparably. With the cessation of all body-images created by the mind comes the total annihilation of *kāmarāga.* Contemplation of the body has reached closure.

Finally realizing that all form is intrinsically empty—empty of personality, empty of distinctive qualities such as beauty and ugliness—the meditator sees the immense harm caused by *kāmarāga.* This ruinous defilement spreads its noxious poison everywhere. It corrodes human relationships and agitates the whole world, distorting people's thoughts and emotions, causing anxiety, restlessness and constant discontent. Nothing else has such a disquieting effect on people's lives. It is the most destructive force on earth. When *kāmarāga* is totally eliminated, the entire world appears empty. The force that ignites fires which consume people's hearts, and fans flames that ravage human society is vanquished and buried. The fire of sexual attraction is extinguished for good—nothing remains to torment the heart. With *kāmarāga* quenched, Nibbāna appears imminent and close at hand. *Kāmarāga* conceals everything, blinding us to all aspects of the truth. Thus, when *kāmarāga* is finally destroyed, we have an unobstructed view of *magga, phala,* and Nibbāna—they are now well within reach.

To summarize, the stage of Anāgāmī is attained when *kāmarāga's* stranglehold on the mind is broken. The Anāgāmī must then practice the same investigative techniques that led to that result, deepening, broadening and perfecting them until bodily forms no longer appear within the *citta.* The mind creates images and then falls for its own creations. The fully accomplished Anāgāmī knows this beyond a shadow of doubt. The human body, and everything that it's believed to represent, are matters of the mind deceiving itself. The body is a lump of matter, a conglomeration of basic natural elements. It is not a person; it is neither pleasing nor repugnant. It simply is as it is, existing in its own natural state. The mind perpetrates the fraud that we perceive, and is then taken in by its own false perceptions.

All human organs are merely devices that the *citta's* knowing nature uses for its own purposes. The knowing presence of the *citta* is diffused throughout the whole body. This diffusion and permeation of conscious awareness throughout the body is entirely a manifestation of the *citta's* own essence. The physical elements composing the body have no consciousness: they have no intrinsic knowing qualities, no conscious presence. The knowing and the sense consciousness associated with the body are strictly matters of the *citta* and its manifestations. The eyes, ears, and nose are able to perceive through the awareness of the *citta.* These organs are merely the means by which sense consciousness occurs. They themselves have no conscious awareness.

Normally we believe that our eyes are capable of seeing. But once we fully understand the body's true nature we know that the eyeball is simply a lump of tissue. The consciousness that flows through the eyes is what actually sees and knows visual objects. Consciousness uses the eyes as a means to access the visual sphere. Our organs of sight are no different from the eyeballs of a dead animal lying at the side of the road. The fleshy eye has no intrinsic value: on its own, it is basically inert. This is known and understood with unequivocal clarity. How then can the body be oneself? How can it belong to oneself? It's completely unnatural.

This principle is seen clearly when the flow of consciousness that diffuses and permeates the human body is drawn back into itself and converges into a deep state of *samādhi.* Then the entire body exists as no more than a lump of matter—a log or a tree stump. When the *citta* withdraws from *samādhi,* conscious awareness returns to the body, spreading out to permeate every limb, every part. Awareness and the ability to know are fundamental functions of the *citta*—not of the physical body. In the normal waking consciousness of the meditator at this level of practice, the knowing presence is fully aware of itself, aware that the *citta* and the knowing are one and the same timeless essence; and that

the physical elements know nothing. In *samādhi,* the body may disappear from awareness but the awareness itself never disappears.

In truth, this is an immutable principle of nature. When the *kilesas* infiltrate the *citta,* however, they grasp everything as oneself—as me or mine—thus confusing one's true nature with the sense faculties that it animates. Such is the nature of the *kilesas.* Wisdom is just the opposite: It knows the body clearly for what it is and corrects this misconception. The *kilesas* always grasp at the body, leading one to believe that the body is a special part of oneself. Wisdom sees the human body as just a conglomeration of common material substances, and consequently relinquishes all personal attachment to it.

The brain, for instance, is a lump of matter. The brain is merely an instrument that human consciousness uses. When the *citta* enters into a deep state of calm and concentration, the conscious awareness that is normally diffused throughout the body simultaneously converges from all areas of the body into one central point of focus at the middle of the chest. The knowing quality manifests itself prominently at that point. It does not emanate from the brain. Although the faculties of memorization and learning arise in association with the brain, direct knowledge of the truth does not. Step by step, beginning with the initial stages of *samādhi* practice, progress in meditation is experienced and understood in the heart—and only in the heart. This is where the truth lies, and the meditator who practices correctly knows this each step of the way. When it comes to understanding the true nature of all phenomena, the brain is not a factor—it is not useful at all. The *citta's* serene and radiant qualities are experienced at the heart. They emanate conspicuously from that point. All of the *citta's* myriad aspects, from the grossest to the most subtle, are experienced clearly from this central spot. And when all defiling influences are finally eliminated from the *citta,* it is there that they all cease.

Within the *citta, saññā* and *sankhāra* are the main agents of delusion. Beginning with the latter stages of body contemplation at the level of Anāgāmī, these mental components of personality take center stage. When the physical component of personality—the body—ceases to be a factor, the Anāgāmī's full focus automatically shifts to the mental components: feeling, memory, thought and consciousness. Among these, the faculties of memory and thought are especially important. They arise and interact continuously to form mental images that they color with various shades of meaning. In examining them, the same basic investigative principles still apply; but instead of images of the body, the thinking process itself becomes the subject of scrutiny.

Using intense introspection, wisdom observes how thoughts and memories arise and then vanish, arise and then vanish, appearing and disappearing in an endless chain of mental activity. No sooner does a thought arise than it vanishes from awareness. Whatever its nature, the result is always the same: a thought lasts for only a brief moment and then it vanishes. The investigation zeros in exclusively on the thinking process, penetrating right to the heart of the mind's essential knowing nature. It follows every thought, every inkling of an idea, as it arises and passes, and then focuses on the next one that surfaces. It is a time-consuming and arduous task that demands undivided attention every moment of the day and night. But by this stage, time and place have become irrelevant. This internal investigation may well continue unremittingly for weeks or months while mindfulness and wisdom wrestle with a constant flux of mental phenomena.

The work is mentally very exhausting. Wisdom goes relentlessly through every aspect of mental activity. It works non-stop day and night. At the same time that it investigates the thinking process, it also makes use of thoughts and ideas to question and probe the workings of the mind in order to gain insights into its true nature. This is thinking for the sake of *magga*—the path of practice. It is a tool that wisdom uses for the purpose of uncov-

ering the truth. It is not indulging in thought merely for its own sake, which is *samudaya*—the cause of suffering. All the same, due to the intense nature of the investigation, the mind becomes fatigued; and it invariably turns dull and sluggish after long hours of intense effort. When this happens, it must take a break. More than at any other time, the mind needs to rest in *samādhi* at regular intervals during this stage. But since the results of peace and tranquility, experienced in *samādhi,* pale in comparison to the truly amazing results gained from the practice of wisdom, the meditator is often very reluctant to opt for *samādhi.* The mind is in a vibrant, heightened state of awareness; and from that perspective *samādhi* seems to be a wasteful, stagnant mental state. In truth, however, *samādhi* constitutes an essential and indispensable complement to the practice of wisdom.

So, the mind must be coerced into *samādhi,* if necessary. It must be forced to set aside current investigations and to focus exclusively on attaining a calm, peaceful, fully-converged mental state. There, it can rest until it is completely refreshed and restored before resuming the liberating work of wisdom. As soon as the mind withdraws from the inactive state of *samādhi,* it will leap immediately into action. Like a horse chafing at the bit, the mind is impatient to return to its principal task—the removal and destruction of all mental defilements. But take care to see that the mind does not rush frantically along the path of wisdom without any letup. Investigating to excess is one form of *samudaya* that can infiltrate the *citta,* causing it to fall under the spell of *sankhāras.* The very faculties of thinking and analyzing that wisdom uses to investigate the mind have a momentum of their own that knows no moderation. They must occasionally be reined in so that a proper balance is maintained between inner work and inner rest. At this stage of the practice, wisdom will automatically work at full capacity. When it is appropriate to rest, focus on *samādhi* with that same degree of intensity. This is the middle way of *magga, phala,* and Nibbāna.

The *citta* and its relationship to the *nāma khandhas* are the central focus of the investigation at this level. The *citta* is the essential knowing nature at the core of our being. It consists of pure and simple awareness: the *citta* simply knows. Awareness of good and bad, and the critical judgments that result, are merely conditions of the *citta.* At times, their activities may manifest as mindfulness; at other times, as wisdom. But the true *citta* does not exhibit any activities or manifest any conditions at all. It is simply a state of knowing. The activities that arise in the *citta,* such as awareness of good and bad, or happiness and suffering, or praise and blame, are all conditions of the consciousness that flow out from the *citta.* Since they represent activities and conditions of the *citta* that are, by their very nature, constantly arising and fading, this sort of conscious awareness is always unstable and always unreliable. Understood in this way, *saññā, sankhāra* and *viññāṇa* are all conditions of the *citta.*

These conditions create the flux of mental phenomena that we call the *nāma khandhas.* Through the interaction of feeling, memory, thought and consciousness, forms and images arise within the *citta.* The awareness that knows them is the *citta.* Defiling influences like *kāmarāga* manipulate and color the quality of that knowing. So long as the *citta,* under the authority of *kāmarāga,* believes this internal imagery to be real and substantial, desire and aversion will occur. Internalized forms are then cherished or despised according to their perceived nature—either good or bad, attractive or repulsive. The *citta's* perspective is then divided between these two extremes. It is tricked into identifying with a world of duality and instability. The *citta's* knowing does not arise or pass away, but it mimics the traits of those things—like the *kilesas* and the *khandhas*—that do. When wisdom finally sees through the deception, the *citta* no longer harbours these phenomena although they continue to arise and vanish in the sphere of the *khandhas.* The *citta* is thus empty of such phenomena.

One moment after another from the day of our birth to the present, the *khandhas* have risen and fallen away continuously. On their own, they have no real substance and it is impossible to find any. The *citta's* interpretation of these phenomena lends them a semblance of personal reality. The *citta* clings to them as the essence of oneself, or as one's own personal property. This misconception creates a self-identity that becomes a burden heavier than an entire mountain, a burden that the *citta* carries within itself without gaining any benefit. *Dukkha* is its only reward for a misconceived attachment fostered by self-delusion.

When the *citta* has investigated these things and can see them with the clarity born of sharp, incisive wisdom, the body is understood to be a natural phenomenon that is real within the limits of its own inherent physical qualities. It is not intrinsic to oneself and so it is no longer an object of attachment. Bodily feelings—painful, pleasant and neutral feelings that occur within the body—are clearly real, but they are only a reality within their specific domain. They too are relinquished. But wisdom is as yet incapable of seeing through the subtle feelings that arise exclusively within the *citta.* So psychological and emotional feelings—painful, pleasant and neutral feelings that occur only within the *citta*—are conditions that continue to interest the *citta.* Although the *citta* is unable to understand the truth about them now, these subtle feelings will serve as constant reminders, always prompting the *citta* to investigate them further.

AS A WHOLE, THE WELLSPRING of thought and imagination is called *sankhāra khandha.* Each thought, each inkling of an idea ripples briefly through the mind and then ceases. In and of themselves, these mental ripples have no specific meaning. They merely flash briefly into awareness and then cease without a trace. Only when *saññā khandha* takes them up do they become thoughts and ideas with a specific meaning and content. *Saññā khandha* is the men-

tal aggregate of memory, recognition and interpretation. *Saññā* takes fragments of thought and interprets and expands them, making assumptions about their significance, and thus turning them into issues. *Sankhāra* then perpetuates these issues in the form of incessant, discursive thinking. *Saññā,* however, is the principal instigator. As soon as *sankhāra* flashes up briefly, *saññā* immediately grasps it and defines its existence as this or that—agitating everything. These two are the mental faculties that cause all the trouble. Together they spin tales—of fortune and of woe—and then interpret them to be the reality of oneself. Relying on memory to identify everything that arises in awareness, *saññā* defines them and gives them meaning.

Sankhāras arise and cease with distinct beginnings and endings, like flashes of lightning or fireflies blinking on and off. When observed closely, *saññā khandha* is far more subtle than *sankhāra khandha.* Bursting into awareness, *sankhāras* are the basic building blocks of thought. *Saññā,* on the other hand, is not experienced as flashes of thought. When the mind is perfectly still and the *khandhas* are very quiet, we can clearly feel the manner in which each *khandha* arises. *Saññā* will slowly spread out, permeating the *citta* like ink moving through blotting paper, expanding slowly until it forms a mental picture. Following *saññā's* lead, the *sankhāras,* that are constantly arising, begin to form a picture and create a story around it that will then take on a life of its own. Thoughts about this or that begin with *saññā* recognizing and interpreting the ripplings of *sankhāra,* molding them into a recognizable image which *sankhāra* then continuously elaborates. Both of these mental factors are natural phenomena. They arise spontaneously, and are distinct from the awareness that knows them.

Now, when the *citta* has investigated the *khandhas* repeatedly, ceaselessly and relentlessly, it will develop an expertise. Contemplating by means of wisdom, we are able to first relinquish the physical *khandha.* At the beginning stage of the investiga-

tion, wisdom will see through the physical body before it sees through—and can let go of—the other *khandhas.* Henceforth, the *citta* can gradually relinquish its attachment to feeling, memory, thought and consciousness in the same manner.

Put simply, the *citta* lets go when wisdom sees through the mental components of personality; before then, it holds on. Once wisdom has penetrated them completely, the *citta* can relinquish them all, recognizing that they are merely ripplings inside the *citta* and have no real substance. Whether good or bad, thoughts arise and cease all the same. No matter how they appear in the mind, they are just configurations created by *saññā* and *sankhāra* and will simply vanish. There are no exceptions. No thought lasts more than an instant. Lacking duration, thoughts lack true substance and meaning; and therefore, they cannot be trusted.

So, what keeps providing us with these thoughts? What keeps producing them? One moment it's churning out one thought; the next moment, another, forever deceiving oneself. They come from sights, sounds, tastes, smells and tactile sensations; they come from feeling, memory, thought and consciousness. We take our assumptions about our perceptions for granted, perpetuating the fraud until it becomes a fire burning our hearts. The *citta* is contaminated by just these factors, these conventions of the mind.

The purpose of the investigation is the removal of these factors. Their absence reveals the true nature of the *citta.* We will see that when the *citta* does not venture out to become involved with an object, it remains naturally calm and radiant; as in the saying: "Monks, the original *citta* is intrinsically bright and clear, but it becomes defiled by the commingling of *kilesas* that pass through." The original *citta* is the radiant *citta.* This statement refers to the original nature of the *citta* that wanders from birth to birth in the cycle of rebirth. It may be compared to the *citta* of a newborn infant whose mental faculties are not sufficiently developed to fully comprehend sense objects. It does not refer to

the original nature of the *citta* that has transcended the cycle of rebirth and is absolutely pure.

As we investigate the *citta* thoroughly, stage by stage, the defiling elements that previously roamed about will converge into a single radiant point, merging with the natural radiance inside the *citta.* This radiance is so majestic and mesmerizing that even exceptional mental faculties like supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom will invariably fall under its spell at first. It's a completely novel experience, never before encountered. It amazes and appears so extraordinary, so majestic and awe-inspiring, that it seems nothing could possibly compare with it at that moment. And why shouldn't it be? It has been an absolute monarch, ruling over the three worlds of existence for countless eons. This point of radiance has held the *citta* under its power and command since time immemorial. And it will continue to mesmerize as long as the *citta* lacks the superior mindfulness and wisdom necessary to free itself from the power it exerts, forcing the *citta* to experience birth on countless levels of existence resulting from actions dictated by this subtle *kilesa.* Ultimately, it is this refined, natural radiance of mind that causes living beings to wander ceaselessly through *saṁsāra,* experiencing birth and death.

Once the *citta* clearly understands *rūpa, vedanā, saññā, sankhāra* and *viññāṇa* with absolute certainty, all that remains are subtle variations of the ripplings that occur exclusively within the *citta.* These are a subtle form of *sankhāra* causing movement within the *citta:* a subtle form of *sukha,* a subtle form of *dukkha,* a subtle radiant splendor within the *citta.* That's all they are. Supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom will take these internal stirrings as the focus of the investigation, constantly observing and analyzing them.

The radiance, produced by the convergence of the various *kilesas,* will be a clearly-perceived point of brightness, a very refined radiance that is centered at a specific point within the *citta.* A refined and corresponding dullness will occasionally arise to

tarnish that radiant center, which causes an equally subtle form of *dukkha* to emerge as well. In truth, brightness and dullness are two sides of the same coin: both are conventional realities. At this level, radiance, dullness, and *dukkha* are companions, appearing together.

For this reason, when the *citta* experiences this wonderful radiance, it is always slightly wary that the experience may be marred by variations at any moment. Mindfulness and wisdom work to protect and maintain the radiance against tarnish. Regardless of its subtlety, the blemish is still a symptom of the *kilesas;* so meditators must not be complacent. These subtle changes in the *citta's* radiance must be examined by wisdom with utmost persistence.

In order to eliminate this burden of anxiety and reach a definitive resolution to this matter, ask yourself: What exactly is this radiance? Focus your attention on it until you know. Why is it so changeable? One moment it's luminous; the next it's slightly tarnished. One moment there's *sukha;* the next there's *dukkha.* One moment there's total satisfaction, the next moment dissatisfaction creeps in. Notice the subtle *sukha* that behaves with just the slightest irregularity. Then, with the slightest appearance of *dukkha,* in line with the refined nature of the *citta* at this level, it is sufficient to make us suspicious. Why does this subtle and refined state of the *citta* display such a variety of conditions? It is not always constant and true. Relentlessly pursue this line of inquiry. Be fearless. Don't be afraid that the destruction of that luminosity will be the destruction of your own true essence. Just focus on that central point to see clearly that the radiance has the same characteristics—of *anicca, dukkha* and *anattā*—as all the other phenomena that you have already examined. The only difference is that the radiance is far more subtle and refined.

At this stage of the investigation, nothing should be taken for granted; nothing in the realm of conventional reality should be trusted. Bring your focus deep into the *citta* and let wisdom take up the challenge. All things that are counterfeit originate

in the *citta.* This radiance is the most conspicuous among them. It is the ultimate counterfeit. Since you cherish and safeguard it more than anything else, you will hardly want to interfere with it. Within the entire physical body, nothing stands out so prominently as this brilliance. It provokes such a mesmerizing sense of inner amazement—and, consequently, such a protective feeling of attachment—that you want nothing to disturb it. There it is. Look at it: it is none other than the supreme ruler of the universe—*avijjā.* But you don't recognize it. Never having seen it before, you will naturally be deceived by the radiance you encounter at this stage. Later, when mindfulness and wisdom are fully prepared, you will know the truth without any need of prompting. This is *avijjā.* The true *avijjā* is right here. It is nothing but a mesmerizing point of brilliance. Don't imagine *avijjā* to be a demon or a beast; for in truth, it is really the most alluring and endearing paragon of beauty in the whole world.

True *avijjā* is very different from what you expect it to be. Therefore, when you encounter *avijjā* you fail to recognize it; and your practice gets caught there. If you have no teacher to advise you and point out a way to investigate, then you will be at an impasse for a long time before you realize its true nature and can go beyond it. When you do have a teacher to advise you on how to proceed, then you can quickly understand the basic principle and strike decisively at that center of radiance without putting any trust in it. You must conduct your investigation here as you have done with other natural phenomena.

Having relinquished all attachment to the five *khandhas,* the *citta* is exceedingly refined at this stage. Although it has let go of everything else, it has yet to let go of itself. Its own intrinsic knowing nature remains permeated by *avijjā's* fundamental ignorance about its own true essence, and therefore, remains attached to itself. It is here that *avijjā* converges into a single point of focus. All of its external outlets having been cut off, it converges into the *citta* without a way to flow out. *Avijjā's* outlets are

the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body, leading to sights, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile sensations. Once mindfulness and wisdom are skilled enough to cut off these outflows for good, *avijjā* is left without an outlet for its expression. Its external agents have been neutralized; all that remains is a subtle incessant vibration resonating within the *citta.* Being deprived of an outlet for its activities, it depends solely on the *citta* as its base of activity. As long as wisdom is unable to thoroughly transcend it, *avijjā* will appear as subtle feelings of *sukha,* subtle feelings of *dukkha,* and a radiance that truly overwhelms and amazes. So the *citta* keeps focusing the investigation on those factors.

Every conventional reality—no matter how refined it is or how bright and majestic it seems—invariably manifests some irregular symptoms. These are sufficient to catch the *citta's* attention and make it search for a solution. Both the very refined *sukha* and *dukkha* that arise exclusively within the *citta,* and the amazing radiance that emanates from it, have their origin in *avijjā.* But since we have never before encountered them, we are deluded into grasping at them when we first investigate this point. We are lulled into a sound sleep by *avijjā,* believing that the subtle feelings of satisfaction and shining radiance are our true essence beyond name and form. Oblivious to our mistake, we accept this majestic *citta,* complete with *avijjā,* as our one true self.

But not for long. At this level, the powerful faculties of supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom are not complacent. They routinely scrutinize, investigate and analyze—back and forth, continually. Eventually they will realize the truth. They will notice that the subtle feelings of *sukha* and *dukkha* display slight variations that seem out of keeping with that majestic radiance. Even though the *dukkha* that manifests itself is ever so slight, it is enough to make us suspicious. Why does the *citta* have these varying conditions? It's never constant. These tiny irregularities that are observed within the radiant center of the *citta* manifest just enough fluctuation to attract the attention of mindfulness and wisdom.

Once they are detected, mistrust arises, alerting wisdom that they should be investigated. So the quality of the *citta's* knowing then becomes the focus of the investigation. Mindfulness and wisdom concentrate on this point, trying to discover what this knowing really consists of. They have already investigated everything else, stage by stage, to the extent that all other factors have been successfully eliminated. But this knowing presence, which is so bright and so amazing: what exactly is it? As mindfulness and wisdom pin their concentration on it, the *citta* becomes the focal point of a full-scale investigation. It is turned into a battlefield for supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom. Before long, they are able to destroy the *avijjā-citta* that, from *avijjā's* perspective, appears so magnificent and majestic. They now totally obliterate it; so that not even the smallest trace remains within the *citta.*

When investigated with sharp, incisive wisdom until its nature is clearly understood, this phenomenon will disintegrate and dissolve away in an entirely unexpected manner. That moment of awakening could be called "Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree" or "The total destruction of *saṁsāra's* cemeteries". An unimpeachable certainty arises, then. The moment when that radiant center disintegrates, something even more remarkable—something that has been concealed by *avijjā*—will be revealed in all its fullness. Within the *citta,* it feels as though a powerful tremor shakes the entire universe. This crucial moment, when the *citta* breaks away from all forms of conventional reality, is one of indescribable wonder and magnificence. It is precisely here—at the moment when *avijjā* is finally extinguished—that *Arahattamagga* is transformed into *Arahattaphala.* When the path is fully developed, the fruition of Arahantship is attained. Dhamma and *citta* have attained complete perfection. From that moment on, all problems cease. This is the nature of Nibbāna.

When that nature which we imagine to be so awesome and amazing finally disintegrates, something that is impossible to describe arises in full measure. That nature is Absolute Purity.

When compared to that state of purity, the *avijjā* that we once held in such awesome regard resembles cow dung; and the nature that was concealed by *avijjā* appears to be pure gold. Even a baby knows which is the more precious between cow dung and gold; so we needn't waste time and proclaim our stupidity by making comparisons.

The disintegration of *avijjā* marks the moment when *Arahattamagga* and *Arahattaphala* arrive together at their final destination. If we make a comparison with climbing the stairs to a house, one foot is on the last step, the other foot is on the floor of the house. We have not yet reached the house with both feet. Only when both feet are firmly on the floor of the house can we say that we have "reached the house". The *citta* "reaches Dhamma" when it has both feet firmly planted in the supreme Dhamma. It has attained the singularity of Nibbāna. From that moment of attainment, the *citta* is completely free. It manifests no further activities for the removal of *kilesas.* This is *Arahattaphala:* the fruition of Arahantship. It is experienced exclusively by those who are free of *kilesas*—those living Arahants who attain *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna.*

As for *rūpa, vedanā, saññā, sankhāra* and *viññāṇa,* they are merely conditions, natural phenomena that spontaneously arise and cease without the ability to impact or contaminate the *citta* in anyway. The same applies to sights, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile sensations: each has its own separate reality. Their existence no longer poses a problem as the *citta* is now free of the ignorance that caused it to make false assumptions about them. Now that the *citta* is fully aware of the truth, it knows the reality of its knowing presence as well as the reality of all natural phenomena within and without. With each having its own separate reality, the conflicts that used to arise between them no longer exist. All are free to go their separate ways. At this stage, the long-standing conflict between the *kilesas* and the *citta* is finally over.

When the truth is known in this way, the *citta* feels no anxiety or apprehension concerning the life and death of the *khandhas.* The *citta* simply perceives the activities of the *khandhas*—how they arise, interact and cease; and how they eventually disintegrate at death. But since the essential knowing nature of the *citta* never dies, fear of death is not a factor. One accepts death—when it comes—as well as life—when it continues. Both are aspects of the same truth.

THIS CONCLUDES THE INVESTIGATION of the *citta.* Upon reaching this level, the *citta* is cut off forever from birth and existence, severed completely from all manifestations of *avijjā* and craving. The state of "*avijjā paccaya sankhāra*"—the state in which "fundamental ignorance conditions the arising of conditioned phenomena"—dissolves completely. It is replaced by *avijjāya tveva asesavirāga nirodhā sankhārā nirodho:* the fading away and cessation of conditioned phenomena that ends the entire mass of suffering.

When *avijjā* is extinguished, conditioned phenomena—which give rise to *dukkha*—are also extinguished. They have disappeared from the knowing nature of the *citta.* Conditioned phenomena, such as thoughts, which are an integral part of the *khandhas,* continue to function in their own sphere but they no longer cause *dukkha.* Uncorrupted by *kilesas,* they simply give form and direction to mental activity. Consciousness arises in the mind, purely and simply without producing suffering. *Viññāṇa paccaya nāmarūpaṁ, nāmarūpa paccaya sāḷayatanaṁ, sāḷayatana paccaya phasso:* All sense media and the sense contact that they condition are just naturally occurring phenomena that exist according to their own intrinsic characteristics. They have no negative effect whatsoever on the *citta* that has successfully completed its task to the point of *evamme tassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti.* This is the total cessation of the entire mass of *dukkha.*

When *avijjā* and all the *kilesas* are extinguished, they are extinguished inside the *citta.* The extinction of *avijjā* means the destruction of the cycle of repeated birth and death. Both must be extinguished within the *citta,* for the *avijjā-citta* is the essence of the world of rebirth, the essence of birth, ageing, sickness and death. Sensual craving, with *avijjā* acting as the prime mover, is the root cause of birth, ageing, sickness and death—and it exists only within the *citta.* When *avijjā* finally disintegrates, being severed from the *citta* forever, total cessation is achieved. The *citta* is then free, vast and supremely empty, without limits, without bounds—totally expansive. Nothing encloses or obstructs it. All contradictions have been eliminated. When the *citta* knows, it knows only the truth; when it sees, it sees only the truth. This is true emptiness.

Degrees of emptiness are experienced at many levels. *Samādhi* meditation is one level. In deep *samādhi,* the body and the thinking mind temporarily vanish from awareness. The *citta* appears empty, but the duration of this emptiness is limited to the time spent practicing *samādhi.* At the initial level of the practice of wisdom, the citta can permanently separate itself from the physical body, but it cannot yet disengage from the mental components of personality: *vedanā, saññā, sankhāra,* and *viññāṇa.* It is completely empty of physical forms, so images of the body no longer appear within the *citta;* but it is not empty of mental concepts. When reaching this level, wisdom is able to distinguish oneself from the physical mass that is the body, and so detach itself forever from the belief that the body is oneself. But it is still unable to separate the mental factors of feeling, memory, thought, and consciousness. By investigating further, the *citta* becomes detached from these mental factors as well. Then nothing remains except an extraordinary radiance that infuses the cosmos, a luminous essence of being that seems boundless, and an amazing and profound mental void. This is the awesome power of genuine *avijjā.* By continuing to employ the full might of mindfulness and wisdom,

avijjā is finally extinguished within the *citta.* When everything permeating the *citta* is removed, one attains genuine emptiness. The emptiness experienced at this level is a total and permanent disengagement that requires no further effort to maintain. This means true and absolute freedom for the *citta.*

The difference between the emptiness of the *avijjā-citta* and the emptiness of the pure *citta,* free of *avijjā,* can be illustrated by imagining a person in an empty room. Standing in the middle of the room, admiring its emptiness, that person forgets about himself. Seeing that there is nothing around him in the room, he reflects only on the emptiness he perceives and not on the fact that he is occupying a central position in that space. As long as someone is in the room, it is not truly empty. When he finally realizes that the room can never be truly empty until he departs, that is the moment when *avijjā* disintegrates and the pure *citta* arises. Once the *citta* has let go of phenomena of every sort, the *citta* appears supremely empty; but the one who admires the emptiness, who is awestruck by the emptiness, that one still survives. The self as reference point, which is the essence of *avijjā,* remains integrated into the *citta's* knowing nature. This is the genuine *avijjā.* One's "self" is the real impediment at that moment. As soon as it disintegrates and disappears, no more impediments remain. Everything is empty: the external world is empty, and the interior of the *citta* is empty. As in the case of a person in an empty room, we can only truly say that the room is empty when the person leaves the room. The *citta* that has gained a comprehensive understanding of all external matters, and all matters pertaining to itself, this *citta* is said to be totally empty. True emptiness occurs when every single trace of conventional reality has disappeared from the *citta.*

Avijjā's extinction is unlike that of all other things that we have investigated up to this point. Their ending was accompanied by a clear and definite understanding of their true nature. Uniquely, the radiance of *avijjā* is extinguished in an instant, like

a flash of lightening. It is a moment of being that happens spontaneously: it just flips over and vanishes completely. Only then, when the radiance disappears, do we know that it was really the genuine *avijjā.* What remains is entirely unique. Its nature is absolutely pure. Although it has never before been experienced, there's nothing to doubt when it appears at that moment. Anything that might cause doubt has ceased along with it. This is the end of all burdens.

All allusions to oneself, to the true essence of one's being refer specifically to this genuine *avijjā.* They indicate that it is still intact. All investigations are done for its sake. This self is what knows; this self is what understands. This self is radiant, light and happy. "I" and "mine"—the genuine *avijjā* lies here. Everything is done for its sake. Once it finally disintegrates, so too does the personal perspective. Things are still done, but not for anyone's sake.

It resembles a pot whose bottom has dropped away: regardless of how much water is poured in, not a drop is retained. Thoughts and ideas continue to arise and cease as a natural function of the *khandhas,* but nothing adheres to the *citta* because the vessel that used to hold them—*avijjā*—has been destroyed. A thought arises at one instant and ceases the next. Since there is nothing to contain them and no one to lay claim to them, thoughts simply move on and vanish. The nature that knows this complete emptiness of self is fully contented within. This nature is true absolute purity, totally free of all burdens.

The real nature of the *citta* is so well concealed by *avijjā* that the incredible natural wonder of the genuine *citta* is never seen. The pitfall of *avijjā* is so well disguised that meditators who reach this stage are bound to be fooled. They are completely mesmerized by what they believe to be the *citta's* true wonder. They cherish it so much that they feel they must preserve and protect it at all costs. For, in essence, this is who they really are, this wonderful radiance belongs to them.

Genuine *avijjā* is a focal point containing many strange and wonderful things hidden within it—things that we could never have imagined to exist. These contaminate the *citta,* much in the same way that a tiny piece of bait is contaminated with enough hidden poison to kill an animal. Since it is virtually impossible to find conceptual realities to which I can compare the contaminating factors, hiding within *avijjā,* I can give only a brief explanation. These factors include: a radiance of being so extraordinary that it seems to be the finished product; a most exceptional sense of happiness, originating from the power of the radiance permeating the *citta,* that seems to transcend the entire realm of conventional reality; a feeling of invulnerability so strong that it seems nothing can possibly affect it; a cherishing, protective attachment to this radiant nature as though it were pure gold.

The *avijjā-citta* seems to have every virtue: it is bright, it is bold, it is supremely contented and its quality of knowing seems limitless. But, despite knowing every conceivable sort of thing, this knowing nature does not know itself. This is the fundamental ignorance of genuine *avijjā.* As soon as this knowing nature turns back and looks into itself, *avijjā* disintegrates. This disintegration, in turn, reveals the truth about the *citta,* the truth about Dhamma. Only *avijjā* keeps this truth hidden from view.

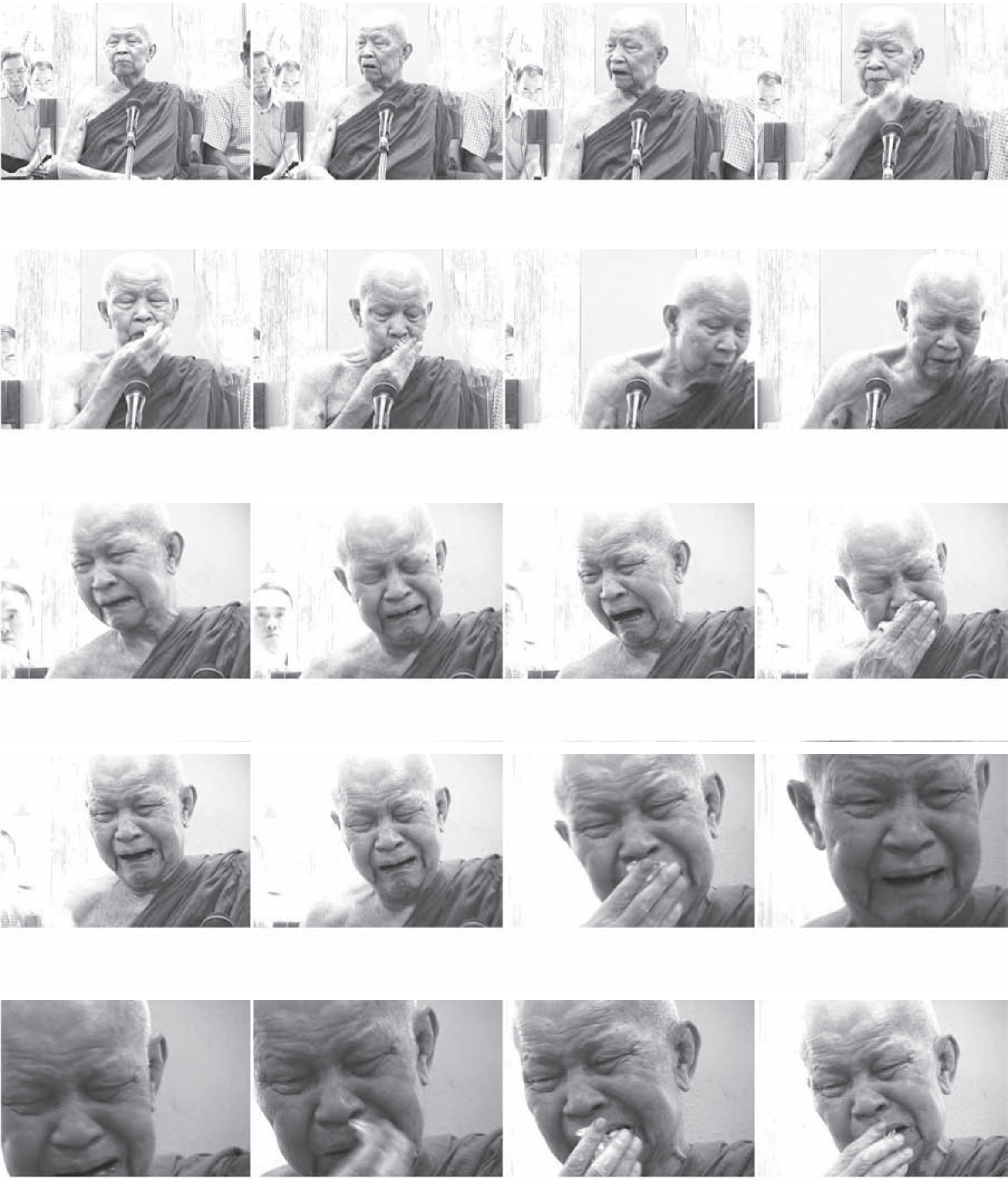
Meditators who are not truly adept in the area of wisdom will have difficulty finding their way out of *avijjā,* because *avijjā* in general and genuine *avijjā* are two very different things. The nature of *avijjā* in general combines all the different aspects of delusion, both external and internal, into a single mental defilement. It's comparable to a tree, which is a combination of leaves, twigs, branches and a trunk. Genuine *avijjā,* on the other hand, is like a tree that is felled and stripped of all its branches. That is to say, through persistent effort, wisdom cuts away at *avijjā's* "outgrowing" activities one at a time so that it gradually loses its exuberant tendencies and converges into a single spot—the *citta.* At this point, *avijjā* no longer has the group of henchmen that it

commanded when it was fully in charge. At this spot we find the genuine *avijjā.*

The offshoots of *avijjā* are many and varied. All other mental defilements are merely its twigs and branches. By concentrating on the offshoots, we tend to overlook the root cause. Because of this, when we actually reach the real *avijjā,* we are confused and don't recognize it. It's like a vine that sprouts up in one place and then creeps along the ground to who knows where. It just goes creeping on and climbing up, with more and more offshoots that grow longer and more entangled. We must grab hold of the vine and keep following it back to its source until we reach the main stem. That's where we will find the roots. When we pull out the roots, the whole plant dies.

PART 2





Arahattaphala

Shedding Tears in Amazement with Dhamma

Venerable Ācariya Mahā Boowa's Dhamma Talk given at the age of 89 on the 2nd of May, 2002.

The basis of death exists precisely in the *citta,* as death and birth are both present within it. The *citta* itself is never born and never dies. Rather, the defiling influences that infiltrate and permeate the *citta* keep us in a repetitious cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Do you understand? Look at the *citta.* If you do not see the poisonous nature of the *citta,* you will fail to see the poisonous nature of these defilements. At the most advanced stage of practice, the mesmerizing and radiant *citta* is itself the real danger. So don't think only of how precious and amazing the *citta* is, for danger lurks there. If you can view the *citta* from this angle, you will see the harm that lays buried within it. Do you understand what I mean? So long as you continue to hold the radiant *citta* in high esteem, you will be caught and remain at an impasse. It's as simple as that. Don't say I didn't warn you. When the time comes, you must sweep aside everything until nothing remains. Preserve nothing. Whatever you leave untouched—that is the Ultimate Danger.

Speaking of this reminds me of the time when I practiced at Wat Doi Dhammachedi. It was early in the morning, just before the meal. At that time my *citta* possessed a quality so amazing that it was incredible to behold. I was completely overawed with myself. I thought, "Oh my! Why is this *citta* so amazingly radiant?" I stood on my meditation track and contemplated its brightness, incredulous about how wondrous it appeared. But, in fact, this very radiance that I found so amazing represented the Ultimate Danger. Do you see my point?

We tend to fall for the radiant *citta.* In truth, I was enthralled and already deceived by it. You see, when nothing else remains, one concentrates on this final point of focus, which, as the center of the perpetual cycle of birth and death, actually manifests a condition of fundamental ignorance we call *avijjā.* This point of focus is the highest state of *avijjā,* the very pinnacle of the *citta* in *saṁsāra.*

Since nothing else remained at that stage, I simply admired *avijjā's* expansive radiance. Still, that radiance did have a focal point. It can be compared to the filament of a pressure lantern. The filament glows brightly, and the light streams out to illuminate the surrounding area. That was the crucial consideration, the one that so amazed and struck me with awe then, causing me to wonder, "Why is my *citta* so incredibly bright?" It seems as though it has completely transcended the world of *saṁsāra.* Look at that!" Such is the magnificent power that *avijjā* displays when we reach the final stage of practice. I didn't yet realize that I had fallen for *avijjā's* deception.

Then suddenly, spontaneously, a maxim of Dhamma arose, as if someone had spoken in my heart. How could I ever forget: *If there is a point or a center of the knower anywhere, that is the nucleus of existence.* Just like the bright center in the filament of a pressure lantern. Look at that! It told me exactly what I needed to know: *this very point is the essence of existence.* But even then, I could not grasp the meaning. I was bewildered. *A point, a center … it meant the focal point of that radiance.*

I began investigating that "point" after the Venerable Ācariya Mun passed away: *If there is a point or a center of the knower anywhere, that is the nucleus of existence.* Had he still lived then, my confusion would immediately have elicited this answer from him: *It's that focal point of the radiance!* And then, that point would have instantly disintegrated. For as soon as I understood its significance, I would also have known its harmfulness, thus causing it to vanish. Instead, I was still carefully protecting and preserving it.

The Ultimate Danger, then, lies right there. The point of Ultimate Danger is the core of brilliant radiance that produces the entire world of conventional reality.

I will remember always. It was the month of February. Venerable Ācariya Mun's body had just been cremated, and I had gone into the mountains. There I got stuck on this very problem. It completely bewildered me. In the end, I gained no benefit at all from the maxim of Dhamma that arose in my heart. Instead of being an enormous boon to me, it became part of the same enormous delusion that plagued me. I was confused: "Where is it, this point?" It was, of course, just that point of radiance, but it never occurred to me that the center of that radiant *citta* could be the Ultimate Danger. I still believed it to be the Ultimate Virtue. This is how the *kilesas* deceive us. Although I had been warned that it was the Ultimate Danger, it still cast a spell on me, making me see it as the Ultimate Virtue. I'll never forget how that dilemma weighed on me.

Eventually I left Wat Doi Dhammachedi and went to Sri Chiang Mai in Ban Pheu district. I stayed there for three months, living deep in the forest at Pha Dak Cave, before returning to Wat Doi Dhammachedi with that mystery still weighing heavily on my mind. Then, while staying on the mountain ridge there, the problem was finally solved.

When that decisive moment arrives, affairs of time and place cease to be relevant; they simply don't intervene. All that appears is the splendid, natural radiance of the *citta.* I had reached a stage where nothing else was left for me to investigate. I had already let go of everything—only that radiance remained. Except for the central point of the *citta's* radiance, the whole universe had been conclusively let go. So, can you understand what I mean: that this point is the Ultimate Danger?

At that stage, supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom converged on the focal point of the *citta* to call it to account, concentrating the force of the whole investigation on that point. I

reached the stage where I wondered why one *citta* had so many different aspects. I can state unequivocally that every aspect of the *citta* was known, and each known aspect was subject to change. No sooner was it grasped, than it changed. One aspect was seen as being good, another as being bad. The investigation centered on that point, analyzing everything, trying to understand: "Why does this one single *citta* have so many different aspects? It's as though it is not unified." No matter which aspect of the *citta* came under investigation, all of its possible permutations were clearly understood according to the profound subtlety of that level of practice where supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom worked together. Combined, the two forces were able to keep up with all the *citta's* variations, no matter how subtle. One moment it's bright, the next moment it's tarnished. "Why does this *citta* have so many different aspects? The changes come from within. See! I'm beginning to catch up with them now. One moment there's *sukha,* the next moment there's *dukkha.*"

In the realm of conventional reality, such conditions are invariably an integral part of the *citta.* With nothing else to investigate, supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom concentrated directly at the point where the changes occurred. One moment there was *sukha,* the next moment *dukkha;* one moment, brightness, the next moment, a slight dullness.

But you must understand that the shifts from *sukha* to *dukkha,* or from brightness to dullness, were so slight that they were just barely discernible. Nonetheless, supreme-mindfulness was right on top of them the entire time.

"Why does the *citta* have so many variations?" At that juncture, mindfulness dropped everything else and turned its full attention to the prime suspect. Every aspect of the investigation came together in the *citta,* and all of them were interrelated. For at the highest level, supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom are so extremely subtle that they permeate and penetrate everything without exception. Supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom

at this paramount level differ from the automatic mindfulness and wisdom that are used to reach that final stage. Automatic mindfulness and wisdom work in unison without prompting. They investigate things in successive stages, chopping them to pieces, section by section. At the paramount level, supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom also work in unison without prompting, but they permeate everything simultaneously.

At that time, they were examining the *citta's* central point of focus. All other matters had been examined and discarded; there remained only that one small point of "knowingness". It became obvious that both *sukha* and *dukkha* issued from that source. Brightness and dullness—the differences arose from the same origin. Why was it that one *citta* had so many different characteristics?

Then, in one spontaneous instant, Dhamma answered the question. Instantaneously—just like that! This is called "Dhamma arising in the heart." *Kilesas* arising in the heart are forces that bind us; Dhamma arising in the heart frees us from bondage. Dhamma arose suddenly, unexpectedly, as though it were a voice in the heart: *Whether it is dullness or brightness, sukha or dukkha, all such dualities are anattā.* There! Ultimately, it was *anattā* that excised those things once and for all. This final, conclusive insight could arise as any one of the *ti-lakkhaṇa,* depending on a person's character and temperament. But for me personally it was *anattā.* The meaning was clear: *Let everything go. All of them are anattā.*

Suddenly, in comprehending that these differing aspects—dullness, brightness, *sukha,* and *dukkha*—are all *anattā,* the *citta* became absolutely still. Having concluded unequivocally that everything is *anattā,* it had no room to maneuver. The *citta* came to rest—impassive, still, in that level of Dhamma. It had no interest in *attā* or *anattā,* no interest in *sukha* or *dukkha,* brightness or dullness. The *citta* resided at the center, neutral and placid. But it was impassive with supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom; not vacantly impassive, gaping foolishly like the rest of

you. Speaking in mundane terms, it seemed inattentive; but, in truth, it was fully aware. The *citta* was simply suspended in a still, quiescent condition.

Then, from that neutral, impassive state of the *citta,* the nucleus of existence—*the core of the knower*—suddenly separated and fell away. Having finally been reduced to *anattā,* brightness and dullness and everything else were suddenly torn asunder and destroyed once and for all.

In that moment when *avijjā* flipped over and fell from the *citta,* the sky appeared to be crashing down as the entire universe trembled and quaked. For, in truth, it is solely *avijjā* that causes us to wander constantly through the universe of *saṁsāra.* Thus, when *avijjā* separated from the *citta* and vanished, it seemed as if the entire universe had fallen away and vanished along with it. Earth, sky—all collapsed in an instant. Do you understand?

No one sat in judgment at that decisive moment. That natural principle arose on its own and passed its own judgement. The universe then collapsed on its own. Originating from a neutral state of the *citta,* the happening took place all so suddenly: in an instant the entire cosmos seemed to flip over and disappear. It was so brilliant! Oh my! Really and truly magnificent! Too extraordinary to be captured in words. Such is the amazing nature of the Dhamma that I now teach.

Tears flowed when I experienced it. Look at me even now! Even now my tears are flowing at the recollection of that event. These tears are the work of the *khandhas.* Please understand that they do not exist in the natural state of purity that appeared at that moment. That natural state appeared suddenly, in all of its incredible magnificence. I want all of you who are so complacent to realize what the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha is really like. Oh! So truly, truly amazing! My goodness, the tears came streaming down my face. Utterly astounded, I exclaimed: "Is this how the Lord Buddha attained Enlightenment? Is this how he attained Enlightenment? Is this what true Dhamma is like?" It

was something that I had never conceived or imagined. It simply arose, unexpected, in an instant. Oh! Indescribably amazing! Look at me. I am crying even now as I remember how amazing it was. The memory is still fresh in my mind. It has remained with me ever since.

My whole body trembled at that moment. It's difficult to explain. Everything happened at once: the sky came crashing down and the world completely vanished. Whereupon, I kept repeating: "What? Is this how the Lord Buddha attained Enlightenment?" But actually it was unnecessary to ask because I had encountered the Truth myself. "Is this what the true Dhamma is like? Is this what the true Sangha is like?" All three had come together, merging into one supreme, remarkable Dhamma—what I call the *Dhamma-element.* "What? How can the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha be one and the same thing?" I had never imagined it to be possible.

"The Buddha is the Buddha. The Dhamma is the Dhamma. The Sangha is the Sangha." This had been impressed in my heart ever since I was old enough to understand such matters. But at the moment when the Supreme Dhamma arose in all its brilliance, all three were of one and the same nature—the true nature of amazing Dhamma. Once it arose in all its brilliance, things that had lain in obscurity, things I never knew, were suddenly illuminated and revealed. I'm not fabricating a fantasy to deceive people. Even now that extraordinary Dhamma moves and amazes me. It is all-embracing, an encompassing luminosity that lights up the entire cosmos, revealing everything. Nothing remains hidden or concealed.

Then the consequences of good and evil and the existence of heaven and hell strike one with the irrefutable force of the obvious. I wish they could strike all you skeptics with such force; all of you who have allowed the *kilesas* to deceive you into believing that there is no such thing as the consequences of evil, no such thing as the consequences of goodness, no such thing as

heaven and hell. They have existed since time immemorial and they have been all-pervasive. You just have not perceived them yet. Do you understand? These things have existed always. They continue to harm those who are foolishly ignorant of their existence and so blinded by the *kilesas'* deceptions that they never glimpse the truth.

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE HOTTER than the fires of hell? Conventionally, there are five crimes which are the most heinous of all and five blazing hell-fires that correspond with them. The five most heinous crimes are: patricide, matricide, killing an Arahant, physically harming a Buddha, and actively instigating a schism in the Sangha. All five of these evil kammas are known in the heart. And they all become clearly obvious at that enlightening moment. Then there is no need to ask where heaven and hell are located. The Buddha did not tell lies. These things were clearly known by him as well, and he described them just as he saw them.

Ahh! This supreme Dhamma is strange and miraculous beyond belief. It encompasses absolutely everything within the heart. When the evidence is so clear, what need is there to inquire further? This absolute clarity is in complete harmony with the heart, so it is unnecessary to ask questions.

Later, as I turned my attention to investigating my past lives, it was terrifying to think how many times I had been born and how many times I had died; how many times I was reborn in hell; and how many times in the heavens and the Brahma realms, only to fall back into hell again. It appeared as though the *citta* was climbing up and down a flight of stairs.

But the *citta* itself never dies. Do you understand this? The *citta* never dies. *Kamma* is buried there in the *citta.* Good *kamma* leads the *citta* upward to the heavens and the Brahma realms. Then, when the good *kamma* is exhausted, the bad *kamma* that

has lain buried pulls the *citta* down into the realms of hell. It is as if the *citta* were climbing up and down a flight of stairs. Do you understand? This is the way it is, so wake up and take notice.

Today I have revealed everything fully—to the extent that tears streamed down my face for all of you to see. Is this madness, or is it virtue? Think about it. Listen carefully to the Dhamma that I teach to the world. I can say unequivocally: My *citta* has no courage and it has no fear. It is completely above such emotions.

So I turned my attention to investigating my own past births. My goodness! If the corpses of this one individual were scattered across the length and breadth of Thailand, there would not be an empty space left. Just this one individual! Imagine the amount of time it took to be born and to die that many times! It would be impossible to count all the births and deaths. There were far, far too many to even try. My thoughts also spread to all the innumerable corpses of each person in the world. Each and every *citta* of each and every living being has exactly the same history of repeated births and deaths. Everyone is equal in this respect. Stretching back indefinitely, everyone's past is crowded with countless corpses. It was an unbearable sight.

Consequently, I felt disgust as I reviewed my past lives. My goodness! Having been reborn so many times, I still struggled, continuously, to be born again and again. If Dhamma had not finally passed judgment, then I would have carried on indefinitely in this manner. I investigated in this way, examining the nature of the world; and the more I did, the more unbearable it became. I saw the same situation everywhere. Every living being in the whole universe is caught in the same vicious cycle. In this respect, all are equal.

Then, a feeling of discouragement arose without warning in my heart. I thought: "How will I ever be able to teach people this Dhamma? What is the point of teaching? Since true Dhamma is like this, how can it possibly be presented so that others will be

able to know and understand it? Wouldn't it be better to live out the rest of my life and then simply pass on?" There! Do you see? I was disheartened. I felt little incentive to teach. As if, having found an escape route, I was satisfied to escape alone. I could see no benefits arising from teaching others. That is how I considered the matter at first. But that wasn't the end of it. Occurring spontaneously in my heart, my reflection on this matter continued to develop in stages.

Looking at the state of the world, I felt discouraged. I saw people who lived in total darkness as being hopeless. Being so blind that they're worthless, the Buddha called such people *padaparama.* Gazing further up the scale, I saw the types of people known as *neyya* and *vipacitaññū.* Persons in the *neyya* category are capable of being trained in the way of Dhamma. Sometimes they make progress, sometimes they lose ground. *Neyya* individuals are fully capable of understanding the Teaching and putting it into practice. Should they be careless, however, they'll lose ground. But if they are earnest in their practice, they can progress rapidly. Depending on the degree of commitment, *neyya* can go either way.

Vipacitaññū individuals always progress toward the goal; they never lose ground. Still, their progress is slower than that of *ugghaṭitaññū,* individuals whose intuitive wisdom is so sharp that they're always fully prepared to make a decisive breakthrough. Were they cattle, they would be waiting at the corral gate. As soon as the gate opened, they'd come rushing out. *Ugghaṭitaññū* are capable of the kind of quick understanding that allows them to pass beyond in one moment of insight.

All living beings must fall into one of these four categories. As I investigated the nature of the world, it separated naturally, of its own accord, into these four types of individuals. I could see that superior individuals existed in that multitude of humanity which I had felt so discouraged about teaching. *Ugghaṭitaññū:* they were fully prepared to cross beyond in an instant. In de-

scending order: there were *vipacitaññū,* those progressing quickly toward the goal; then, the *neyya,* whose desire to lie down and take it easy competes with their desire to be diligent. Do you see what I mean? Those two opposing forces are vying for supremacy within their hearts. And finally *padaparama:* those who are human in physical appearance only. They have gained nothing at all to enhance their future prospects. Death for such people is death without distinction. There is only one possible direction they can go—down. And they fall further and further with each successive death. The way up is blocked, for they have gained absolutely nothing beneficial to take along with them. They can only go down. Remember this well! This teaching comes straight from my heart. Do you think I am bluffing and telling you deliberate falsehoods?

When compared with a heart that's absolutely pure, the world is one big refuse bin, containing different grades of garbage. From the highest, *ugghaṭitaññū,* to the lowest and most common grade, *padaparama,* all possible types are gathered together in the same great receptacle. The entire world of conventional reality is one big contaminated mix of good things and bad things. Do you understand? In my investigation, I sifted through this huge pile of garbage and uncovered four distinct grades of living beings.

Out of that investigation, a realization then arose that countered the discouragement which made me reluctant to teach others the way. An inspirational thought emerged suddenly in the *citta:* "If this Dhamma is so supreme, so superb that no one can possibly comprehend it, am I then some kind of divine being? What about me? How was it that I came to realize this Dhamma? What was the reason? What brought about this realization?"

As I considered the cause, my thoughts seized on the path of practice that had led me to that realization. It was the same path that the Lord Buddha had taught: *dāna, sīla, bhāvanā.* This was the path that led me to that point. There is no other way to reach it. Reviewing my past practice, I conceded that the same

path could lead others there as well. Maybe there were only a few, but there definitely were some who could make it. I could not deny that. The awareness that it would benefit at least some people encouraged me to begin teaching those who were worthy to be taught.

After that, monks began to gather around me in the forests and mountains where I lived, and I taught them to be resolute in their practice. Gradually, little by little, my teaching began to spread, until it extends far and wide today. Now people from across Thailand and around the world come to listen to Ācariya Mahā Boowa expound the Dhamma. Some travel here to hear me talk in person; some listen to taped recordings of my talks that are broadcast throughout Thailand on the radio and the Internet.

I can assure you that the Dhamma I teach does not deviate from those principles of truth that I myself have realized. Do you understand me? The Lord Buddha taught the same message that I am conveying to you. Having said this, I want to exclaim *Sādhu!* Although I am a mere mouse compared to the Buddha, the confirmation of that realization is right here in my heart. All that I have fully realized within myself concurs with everything that the Lord Buddha taught. Nothing that I have realized contradicts the Lord Buddha in any way. The teaching that I present is based on principles of truth which I have long since wholeheartedly accepted. That's why I teach people with such vigor as I spread my message throughout Thailand.

Speaking conventionally, I talk boldly as if I were a conquering hero. But the Supreme Dhamma in my heart is neither bold nor fearful. It has neither loss nor gain, neither victory nor defeat. Consequently, my teaching emanates from pure, unadulterated compassion. For example, if I see a dog-fight and proceed to pull them apart to stop them from biting each other, I don't have any interest in who's winning and who's losing. It's the dogs who care. They are the ones who are biting, so, they are the ones

in pain. I simply grab and separate them so they will stop biting each other. Such is the nature of Dhamma. Dhamma tries to separate people who are always quarreling, always arguing over who is right and who is wrong.

This is akin to what I've said about present-day Thailand. The comparison is appropriate. Let the Dhamma speak for itself. At this time I am very involved with the world. No one is more involved than Ācariya Mahā Boowa. By that I mean that I am constantly engaged in separating the dogs of this world so they won't keep biting each other. These days, both lay people and monks act like dogs, shoving themselves forward and howling noisily as they fight for the honors. So I teach them Dhamma, which is equivalent to separating and restoring calm among fighting dogs. Dhamma represents the Truth. If we relinquish all that is false and hold only to that which is true, then both the people in our society and the monks who uphold the *sāsana* will live in peace. But since all the dogs—both the good and the evil ones—are fighting right now, the country is in turmoil. The Buddhasāsana regards people's hearts as the main staging ground. This great arena is now being broken up and scattered because those dogs are staging a dogfight in the one area which is most sacred to the hearts of all Thais—the Buddhasāsana.

So I ask them all to cease and desist, for no benefit can be gained from fighting like dogs. For, in truth, there are no winners, only losers. Both those who win and those who lose are hurt in equal measure. So disengage, stand back, and accept reason as your guiding principle. In that way, Thailand, its citizens and the *sāsana* will all have peace and happiness. Nothing disastrous will then befall the country.

Those who bare their teeth and boast that they are championing a just cause are, without exception, already badly defeated. No one is right, because arguing is always wrong. Just like two boxers slugging it out in the ring, both the winner and the loser come away battered and bruised. Who can take pride in that?

It's not something to boast about. Arguing fosters bitterness and resentment in both parties. It becomes a battle of views and opinions, an attempt to glorify oneself that degenerates into a shouting match where no one listens to reason. Such dogs have taken the whole of Thailand as their battleground and, if they continue, they are bound to leave the country in ruin.

I want people on all sides to think about what I've said. With total sincerity, I have just shed my own tears in an attempt to present this Dhamma for the Thai people to hear. If you stop your bickering now, no misfortune will occur. Were we to speak in worldly terms about winning, then those who are right will win for the sake of a righteous cause, while those who admit wrong and accept defeat for the same righteous cause are also winners. Then both sides will unite and live in perfect harmony. But for those who snap at each other without giving in, there can never be winners or losers among them—only blood-covered parties on both sides. Is that acceptable? I don't want to see that happen. Thailand is a Buddhist country. I don't want to hear that the Buddhist faithful are fighting with each other like dogs and spattering their blood throughout the sacred monasteries of our land. So please abandon this madness.

Ultimately, the regions of hell, and the heavens, the brahma worlds and *Nibbāna* will vouch for who is right and who is wrong, who is virtuous and who is evil. So never make the mistake of believing yourself above a fall into the deepest hell. Don't display those self-righteous opinions that deviate so much from the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha. The Land of Dhamma is the heavens and *Nibbāna,* which are the domains of all virtuous individuals. Such aberrant views will merely drag you down to the level of biting and gnarling dogs, and bring incalculable ruin in their wake. Such talk will lead only to a bloody dogfight. Remember this well!

Today I have explained everything to my utmost. It is now 53 years since I attained that Supreme Dhamma. Today I have de-

scribed that experience for your benefit. Never thwarted, never frustrated, this Dhamma is always sound and correct. It expresses itself perfectly to suit the circumstances that arise. For instance, today it expressed itself with such force that the tears of Ācariya Mahā Boowa poured forth for everyone to see. This is an expression of Dhamma's amazing propensity, and it is this very same Dhamma that I teach people. I never teach Dhamma in a casual manner—I always teach it in earnest.

As I explained many times, I was always inclined to sacrifice my life for the sake of Dhamma. No one would believe how much effort I put into the practice. Since others have not done what I have, they cannot imagine the extraordinary effort I put into attaining this Supreme Dhamma. But I did exert such effort, and these are the results. It demonstrates the power of uncompromising diligence when it is used for Dhamma. The more determination, the better. Then one can die victorious, not badly defeated. Remember this well.

Part 3





Arahattapatta

How Can an Arahant Shed Tears?

Venerable Ācariya Mahā Boowa's Dhamma Talk on the 17th of June 2002 one and a half months after the previous teaching.

I tell you quite frankly: I no longer experience past, present, or future; for I no longer have any trace of conventional reality left within my heart. I can assure you that nothing more remains. Such is the power of the Lord Buddha's Dhamma for overcoming the *kilesas*. Dhamma resides in the heart. The *kilesas* also dwell in the heart and are its enemies. And we are the ones caught in the middle, bearing the good and bad fortune that results from this clash, for we belong to the heart, just as the heart belongs to us.

Dhamma supports and sustains us. Our enemies, the *kilesas,* oppress us, always beating us into submission. Both arise from the same place—the heart. Through the practice of meditation, Dhamma gradually gains strength enough to overpower the *kilesas* within—from the grossest to the most subtle—and then, to completely sever them from the heart. This is what we mean when we say that the whole mass of suffering created by the *kilesas* is destroyed. The destruction of that suffering marks the emergence of Supreme Happiness; that is, the arising of the Supreme Dhamma. And it happens precisely where the luminosity of Dhamma was concealed by a thick covering of *kilesas,* preventing its light from streaming forth in all its brilliance.

I recalled this momentous experience with tears as I gave a recent talk. I have known this experience clearly within my heart since it first happened; but it was only recently that circumstances arose that prompted me to openly discuss it. Powerful indeed is the impact of Dhamma when it expresses itself. It issues forth

in all directions, profoundly affecting everything with which it makes contact. Not only does it affect mental phenomena in this way; it also affects physical phenomena, like tears. When associated with Dhamma, tears spill forth with the same intensity. The problem is, living beings throughout the universe are simply blind to the *kilesas.* Answer this: Who in this world has opened his eyes to see the truth about Dhamma? No one. So, when they hear that Ācariya Mahā Boowa shed tears in public, they immediately wonder why. What's the matter with him? If he really has put an end to his *kilesas* and become an Arahant, why is he crying like that? There! Do you see? These people mistake the tears for the Arahant. Do you understand?

Do you realize that all parts of the human body are merely aspects of conventional reality? They are associated with the *citta,* which in turn has responsibility for them. Once the *citta*—their caretaker—collapses, these conventional realities, being its enemies, are then torn asunder. Then the pure nature of the *citta* shines forth in all its brilliance, following its own natural principle. This is one aspect of the experience.

Another aspect is this: At that same moment, a sympathetic and intense physical reaction takes place, causing the body to shake and tremble in response. Is that trembling intentional? No, it's a consequence of Dhamma's overwhelming power as it deals a fatal blow to the *kilesas* and forces them to separate from the *citta* forever. Such a momentous event creates an enormous impact—the entire universe appears to tremble and quake. That's what it feels like when Dhamma and the *kilesas* are finally separated for good, and the world of conventional reality and the world of Absolute Freedom ultimately split apart. The nature of pure Dhamma then appears in all of its supreme magnificence, fully revealed within the heart that experiences it.

Being closely associated with the *citta,* body and mind react to this amazing and unique experience. The *citta's* true nature always existed; but it had never displayed itself in this manner to

the body and the conscious mind. Being wholly unprecedented, the impact of the occurrence is enormous. The aggregates of body and mind are all conventional realities, the instruments the heart uses for its own purposes. When the *citta* collapses, the pure nature that emerges then remains completely unaffected. But the aggregates of body and mind, the *khandhas*—being strictly governed by the laws of *anicca, dukkha,* and *anattā*—are intensely affected. Reflecting their inherently unstable nature, the reactions occur in the *khandhas,* and then simply cease. The pure nature of the *citta* never arises, and never ceases. Herein lies the difference between the two.

Consequently, it is impossible to compare the pure heart of the Arahant with the pile of excrement we know as the human body. Having seen this truth clearly for oneself, it is unnecessary to ask for further clarification. In such an event, one would simply salute and say *Sādhu* to the Buddha himself, even if he were immediately before one. Since the Ultimate Truth is self-evident within one's heart, there would be no need to seek his verification. *N'atthi seyyo va pāpiyo:* Nothing surpasses the Supreme Dhamma. This realization arising in the heart is identical with the pure nature of the Arahant. It is a purity that completely transcends the conventional laws of *anicca, dukkha,* and *anattā.* They simply no longer apply.

The *khandhas* are what become excited; for instance, when tears are shed. Tears may be shed for a number of reasons. Sadness induces tears, as does joy. Smoke brings tears, and so do onions and garlic. Why all the fuss then about tears? After all, tears are only water—the water element. Just like the physical elements of earth, fire and wind, water is entirely an aspect of conventional reality. Profoundly moved by the pure nature of Dhamma that suddenly appears, these physical elements are agitated. The pure nature itself, however, is wholly imperturbable. It is the nature of the *khandhas* to be always reactive. They are agitated by good things and bad things, by pleasure and pain, sorrow and joy. They

are forever excitable in one way or another. But at this moment, it is the sudden appearance of Dhamma's pure nature that stirs them.

The *khandhas* are not the Arahant; the Arahant is not the *khandhas.* Absolutely and without exception, the *khandhas* are conventional realities. By contrast, that pure nature is completely free of all vestiges of conventional reality—one hundred percent. So the two do not, cannot mix. They are mutually exclusive. They merely acknowledge each other, according to their respective status. The *khandhas,* having the status of conventional reality, act so accordingly. Pure nature, appearing suddenly of its own accord, has the status of Absolute Freedom. Thus, since time immemorial, the *khandhas* of all people from all ages have always been fully consistent with their status as conventional realties.

Having attained enlightenment, the Buddha and the Arahants did not then destroy their *khandhas* and so prevent them from functioning. For example, laughter. Laughter is a natural function of the *khandhas;* as is shedding tears. Both are merely functions that the *khandhas* perform according to their particular status. As long as body and mind maintain a basis of reasonably good health, they can perform any function they choose. For instance, we can take earth and shape it into buildings. Bricks, cement, stones, sand, steel—if they don't come from the earth, where else do they come from? As long as we have this kind of material basis, we can build anything we choose.

What is the matter with people? Can it be that you are crazy? That's what I would like to ask. I am criticized for shedding tears in the name of Dhamma, but has any one of you seen Dhamma's pure nature? I myself had not seen it before. Nor had any of my forefathers ever seen that Supreme Dhamma, because they never practiced the way. I am a practicing monk. As a result of my practice, I have steadily gained knowledge and insight, stage by stage, in the manner that I have described to you. I practiced in that manner until I finally attained the crowning achievement,

an attainment that has now expressed itself in its own natural way.

Have any of you tried to see the Supreme Dhamma? Or are you all satisfied to sit blindly with your eyes closed and your mouths agape, making animal noises at the pure nature of Dhamma? Why don't you bark at the filth around your own neck instead? Think about that! That pile of excrement is a mass of fire. Greed, anger, and delusion produced that fiery mass of excrement. Everyone's heart is polluted with it. Why don't you take a look? What is the point of criticizing the preeminent nature of Dhamma? The Lord Buddha was preeminent before us. If Ācariya Mahā Boowa is untrue to the Buddha's teaching, then all of the Sāvaka Arahants are untrue to it as well. But, in fact, those venerable Arahants have always been estimable. Since when has filth become virtuous? What gives it the right to boast and brag, criticizing this posture or praising that one, approving or disapproving of an Arahant's behavior? It's just a pile of excrement! Do you understand?

Don't you realize yet that your hearts are full of this dirt and defilement? Do you really feel proud of that? Such harmful pride will drag you down even further. If you fail to see the harm of defiling pride, you will clash with Dhamma. Clashing with Dhamma is like a knife driven against a stone. What happens when a knife is wielded against a stone? What happens when you drive a car into the side of a mountain? Who gets hurt? Think about it! The bucket of excrement suffers the blow. The preeminent individuals have already transcended the world. What possible damage could befall them? As Buddhists, you should take to heart this general rule of conduct: Don't use your filth to befoul others, and so destroy yourselves in the process. There is no benefit to be gained from that. The preeminence I speak of: from where does it come? I have already demonstrated this for everyone in present-day Thailand to see. Am I now the foremost villain in the whole country, while the rest of the population are the epitome of preeminence? See and consider for yourself!

If you refuse principles of reason, what will you accept then? What do people search for nowadays? I searched, until I nearly died, to find the Supreme Dhamma that I now teach to my disciples with a loving, compassionate heart. I am not boasting or bragging about myself. Where would such boasting come from? Boasting, malicious gossip—these are all unnecessary extra baggage. What could possibly be added to the perfect nature of Dhamma? If it requires something extra, how could it be called "perfect"? Remember this well.

Thai Buddhists behave with exceptional ignorance. As soon as I say something, the whole country starts barking noisily. It's pitiful! I feel very sorry for you. That is precisely what the Lord Buddha felt when he wondered why the world was so blind. Tears streamed down his face at that moment—both tears of great compassion and tears of amazement at the purity of Dhamma. Seeing how utterly blind people were, the Lord Buddha felt such dismay that he was discouraged about teaching Dhamma to them: How could people be so unaware of the excrement in their hearts? It's the same today. When people hear the Dhamma being taught, they criticize the teacher in a way that only brings them harm instead of delight in receiving a valuable lesson which they can then struggle to put into practice as best they can, as befits those who respect their teacher. Why don't they think to do things that will enhance their well-being for a change? For this reason I say with conviction that Thai Buddhist are very stupid.

Ācariya Mahā Boowa is never perturbed. Let the whole world come and bark as it will; I shall speak my mind and remain unaffected. The pure nature of Dhamma is impervious to all worldly influences. Those who are affected by misbehavior must live with that misbehavior. Those affected by loss will live with the loss; those affected by gain will live with the gain. When virtuous conduct affects one, one will make virtuous conduct one's home. That is to say, one will be reborn according to that good *kamma.* On the other hand, when it is wrongdoing that affects one, then

one will live with a blazing fire in one's heart. Is that what you want?

The Lord Buddha's Teaching is always relevant, as when he loudly proclaimed:

Kho nu hāso kim ānando
Niccaṁ pajjalite sati
Andhakārena onaddhā
Padīpaṁ na gavessatha

"When the world is engulfed by a blazing bonfire that rages day and night, how can you be so totally blind as to keep smiling and laughing continually? Why don't you search for a refuge that you can depend on?" Listen to that!

The Dhamma that I teach is the same *kho nu hāso…* What craziness grips you all? You are following in the footsteps of those drunkards that the Lord Buddha overheard when he declared: *Kho nu hāso…* They were just a bunch of drunks that the Buddha was addressing; not a group of noble individuals. This story is in the scriptures: The Lord Buddha versus a band of drunks. Think of the difference between them. Yet, even after they received a scolding from the Buddha, they still weren't conscious of their faults.

The tears that I shed recently conveyed a similar message. How is it then that you still remain unconscious of your own faults? Are you even more slow-witted than those drunkards? If you want to avoid coming to ruin, you should ask yourselves this question.

I'm trying my utmost now to help society. Within my heart I have no sense of courage and no sense of fear; no such things as gain or loss, victory or defeat. My attempts to assist you stem entirely from loving compassion. I sacrificed everything to attain the Supreme Dhamma that I teach you now. Those sacrifices were not made to attain something evil. I nearly gave up my life

in search of Dhamma, crossing the threshold of death before I could proclaim to the world the Dhamma that I had realized. Why is it then that no one can accept it? What is the matter with Thailand these days? That's what I want to know.

The more self-important people feel, the more arrogant and conceited they become, until they begin to think themselves even more clever than the Buddha, the Supreme Teacher. Doesn't Thailand realize yet that its situation is growing worse by the day? How stupid its people have become! No one pays attention anymore to Dhamma. Who knows, before long people may stop going to the monasteries altogether. Witness their reaction to what I said recently: they ridiculed me with all manner of sarcastic remarks. This is precisely what happens when the *kilesas* are all-powerful. When they saw me shed tears the other day, they derided and treated me with scorn. But I remain unperturbed. Let every family in the country criticize me, I have a quarrel with no one. I teach people purely out of loving kindness. Why can't they accept this? Are the Thai people really so ignorant?

Has the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha completely disappeared from the world? Do the Lord Buddha and the Dhamma no longer have supremacy? Are those practitioners—who have realized the Truth by following the Buddha's teaching—seen merely as pious frauds and enemies of the people? What ails Thai Buddhists? Are they not decent human beings? Why are they behaving like a pack of dogs?! That's the attitude I'm forced to take.

But, I am not angry with anyone. The forceful tone of my remarks derives from the power of Dhamma. Dhamma is imperturbable. It feels no anger or resentment toward anybody. However, Dhamma always expresses itself with its full power. The same can be said for the *kilesas:* they tend to express themselves forcefully, with the full power in their possession. The difference is that expressions of the *kilesas'* power causes terrible damage to the world while expressions of Dhamma's power are like water cooling the world's fires.

Do you think that I spoke in anger? Where does anger come from? Anger comes from the *kilesas.* For someone who is completely free of *kilesas,* you cannot make him angry, try as you will. There is simply no anger left in his heart. If even a small amount of anger remained, he could not be called an Arahant free of *kilesas.* For anger, greed, and delusion are all *kilesas.* Do you understand? Investigate this matter well and you will see.

The physical body is a conventional reality through and through. As long as it remains directly associated with the pure nature of the *citta,* it is bound to be affected accordingly. This is only natural. Where am I wrong? Who here claims to be so superior that they can oppose the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha? Come forward, let's hear you boast!

Let's hear you say: "Ācariya Mahā Boowa is an extremely stupid monk". I want to hear from all you clever people. So emerge from your toilet holes and try boasting about your attainments in Dhamma. I would really like to see something genuine emerge, but I see nothing of the kind. Wherever I look, all I see are lazy people full of greed, anger, and delusion. What kind of superiority is that? Still, they continue to come forward with their extravagant boasts. There is no end to their madness.

Appendix

Citta—The Mind's Essential Knowing Nature.

The following comments about the nature of the *citta* have been excerpted from several discourses given by Ācariya Mahā Boowa.

Of foremost importance is the citta, the mind's essential knowing nature. It consists of pure and simple awareness: the *citta* simply knows. Awareness of good and evil, and the critical judgements that result, are merely activities of the *citta.* At times, these activities may manifest as mindfulness; at other times, wisdom. But the true *citta* does not exhibit any activities or manifest any conditions at all. It only knows. Those activities that arise in the *citta,* such as awareness of good and evil, or happiness and suffering, or praise and blame, are all conditions of the consciousness that flows out from the *citta.* Since it represents activities and conditions of the *citta* that are, by their very nature, constantly arising and ceasing, this sort of consciousness is always unstable and unreliable.

The conscious acknowledgement of phenomena as they arise and cease is called *viññāṇa.* For instance, *viññāṇa* acknowledges and registers the sense impressions that are produced when sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations contact the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body respectively. Each such contact between an external sense sphere and its corresponding internal base gives rise to a specific consciousness that registers the moment at which each interaction takes place, and then promptly ceases at the same moment that the contact passes. *Viññāṇa,* therefore, is consciousness as a condition of the *citta. Sankhāra,* or thoughts and imagination, is also a condition of the *citta.* Once the *citta* has given expression to these conditions, they tend to proliferate

without limit. On the other hand, when no conditions arise at all, only the *citta's* inherent quality of knowing is apparent.

Still, the essential knowing of the average person's mind is very different from the essential knowing of an Arahant. The average person's knowing nature is contaminated from within. Arahants, being *khīṇāsava,* are free of all contamination. Their knowing is a pure and simple awareness without any adulteration. Pure awareness, devoid of all contaminants, is supreme awareness: a truly amazing quality of knowing that bestows perfect happiness, as befits the Arahant's state of absolute purity. This Supreme Happiness always remains constant. It never changes or varies like conditioned phenomena of the world, which are always burdened with *anicca, dukkha,* and *anattā.* Such mundane characteristics cannot possibly enter into the *citta* of someone who has cleansed it until it is absolutely pure.

The *citta* forms the very foundation of *saṁsāra;* it is the essence of being that wanders from birth to birth. It is the instigator of the cycle of existence and the prime mover in the round of repeated birth and death. *Saṁsāra* is said to be a cycle because death and rebirth recur regularly according to the immutable law of *kamma.* The *citta* is governed by *kamma,* so it is obliged to revolve perpetually in this cycle following *kamma's* dictates. As long as the *citta* remains under the jurisdiction of *kamma,* this will always be the case. The *citta* of the Arahant is the sole exception, for his *citta* has completely transcended *kamma's* domain. Since he has also transcended all conventional connections, not a single aspect of relative, conventional reality can possibly become involved with the Arahant's *citta.* At the level of Arahant, the *citta* has absolutely no involvement with anything.

Once the *citta* is totally pure, it simply knows according to its own inherent nature. It is here that the *citta* reaches it culmination; it attains perfection at the level of absolute purity. Here the continuous migration from one birth to the next finally comes to an end. Here the perpetual journey from the higher realms of existence to the lower ones and back again, through the repetitive

cycle of birth, ageing, sickness, and death, totally ceases. Why does it cease here? Because those hidden, defiling elements that normally permeate the *citta* and cause it to spin around have been completely eliminated. All that remains is the pure *citta,* which will never again experience birth and death.

Rebirth is inevitable, however, for the *citta* that has yet to reach that level of purity. One may be tempted to deny that rebirth follows death, or one may doggedly hold to the nihilistic viewpoint that rejects all possibility of life after death, but such convictions cannot alter the truth. One's essential knowing nature is not governed by speculation; nor is it influenced by people's views and opinions. Its preeminence within one's own being, coupled with the supreme authority of *kamma,* completely override all speculative considerations.

As a consequence, all living beings are compelled to move from one life to the next, experiencing both gross incarnations, like the creatures of land, sea and air, and the more refined incarnations of ghosts, *devas* and *brahmas.* Although the later are so ethereal as to be invisible to the human eye, the *citta* has no difficulty taking birth in their realms. The appropriate *kamma* is all that is required. *Kamma* is the determining factor; it is the power that propels the *citta* on its ceaseless journey in *saṁsāra*.

The *citta* is something so extremely subtle that it is difficult to comprehend what actually constitutes the *citta.* It is only when the *citta* attains a state of meditative calm that its true nature becomes apparent. Even experienced meditators who are intent on understanding the *citta* are unable to know its true nature until they have attained the meditative calm of *samādhi.*

Even though the *citta* resides within the body, we are nevertheless unable to detect it. That's how very subtle it is. Because it is dispersed throughout the physical body, we cannot tell which part or which aspect is actually the true *citta.* It is so subtle that only the practice of meditation can detect its presence and differentiate it from all the other aspects associated with the body. Through the practice of meditation we can separate them out, seeing that

the body is one thing and the *citta* is another. This is one level of separation, the level of the *citta* that is experienced in *samādhi,* but its duration is limited to the time spent practicing *samādhi.*

At the next level, the *citta* can totally separate itself from the physical body, but it cannot yet disengage from the mental components of personality: *vedanā, saññā, sankhāra,* and *viññāṇa.* When the *citta* reaches this level, one can use wisdom to separate out the body and eventually become detached forever from the belief that one's body is oneself, but one is still unable to separate the mental factors of feeling, memory, thoughts, and consciousness from the *citta.* By using wisdom to investigate further, these mental factors can also be detached from the *citta.* We then see clearly for ourselves—*sandiṭṭhiko*—that all five *khandhas* are realities separate from the *citta.* This is the third level of separation.

At the final level, our attention turns to the original cause of all delusion, that extremely subtle pervasion of ignorance we call *avijjā.* We know *avijjā's* name, but we fail to realize that it is concealed there within the *citta.* In fact, it permeates the *citta* like an insidious poison. We cannot see it yet, but it's there. At this stage, we must rely on the superior strength of our mindfulness, wisdom, and perseverance to extract the poison. Eventually, by employing the full power of mindfulness and wisdom, even *avijjā* can be separated from the *citta.*

When everything permeating the *citta* has finally been removed, we have reached the ultimate stage. Separation at this level is a permanent and total disengagement that requires no further effort to maintain. This is true freedom for the *citta.* When the body suffers illness, we know clearly that only the physical elements are affected, so we are not concerned or upset by the symptoms. Ordinarily, bodily discomfort causes mental stress. But once the *citta* is truly free, one remains supremely happy even amid intense physical suffering. The body and the pain are known to be phenomena separate from the *citta,* so the *citta* does not participate in the distress. Having relinquished them unequivocally, body and feelings can never again intermix with the *citta.* This is the *citta's* absolute freedom.

BEING INTRINSICALLY BRIGHT AND CLEAR, the *citta* is always ready to make contact with everything of every nature. Although all conditioned phenomena without exception are governed by the three universal laws of *anicca, dukkha,* and *anattā,* the *citta's* true nature is not subject to these laws. The *citta* is conditioned by *anicca, dukkha,* and *anattā* only because things that are subject to these laws come spinning in to become involved with the *citta* and so cause it to spin along with them. However, though it spins in unison with conditioned phenomena, the *citta* never disintegrates or falls apart. It spins following the influence of those forces which have the power to make it spin, but the true power of the *citta's* own nature is that it knows and does not die. This deathlessness is a quality that lies beyond disintegration. Being beyond disintegration, it also lies beyond the range of *anicca, dukkha,* and *anattā* and the universal laws of nature. But we remain unaware of this truth because the conventional realities that involve themselves with the *citta* have completely surrounded it, making the *citta's* nature thoroughly conform to theirs.

Birth and death have always been conditions of the *citta* that is infected by *kilesas.* But, since *kilesas* themselves are the cause of our ignorance, we are unaware of this truth. Birth and death are problems arising from the *kilesas.* Our real problem, our one fundamental problem—which is also the *citta's* fundamental problem—is that we lack the power needed to be our own true self. Instead, we have always taken counterfeit things to be the essence of who we really are, so that the *citta's* behavior is never in harmony with its true nature. Rather, it expresses itself through the *kilesas'* cunning deceits, which cause it to feel anxious and frightened of virtually everything. It dreads living, and dreads dying. Whatever happens—slight pain, severe pain—it becomes afraid. It's perturbed by even the smallest disturbances. As a result,

the *citta* is forever full of worries and fears. And although fear and worry are not intrinsic to the *citta,* they still manage to produce apprehension there.

When the *citta* has been cleansed so that it is absolutely pure and free of all involvement, only then will we see a *citta* devoid of all fear. Then, neither fear nor courage appear, only the *citta*'s true nature, existing naturally alone on its own, forever independent of time and space. Only that appears—nothing else. This is the genuine *citta.* The term "genuine *citta*" refers solely to the absolute purity, or the *sa-upādisesa-nibbāna,* of the Arahant. Nothing else can wholeheartedly and without reservations be called the "genuine *citta*". I myself would be embarrassed to use the term in any other way.

The term "original *citta*" means the original nature of the *citta* that spins endlessly through the cycle of rebirth. The Buddha indicated this when he said: "Monks, the original *citta* is intrinsically bright and clear, but it becomes defiled by the commingling of the *kilesas* that come passing through."

In this sense, "original *citta*" refers to the origin of conventional reality (*sammuti*), not the origin of Absolute Purity (*parisuddhi*). When referring to the original citta, the Buddha stated: *"Pabhassaramidaṁ cittaṁ bhikkhave." Pabhassara* means radiant, it does not mean pure. His reasoning is absolutely correct; it is impossible to argue against it. Had the Buddha equated the original *citta* with the pure *citta,* one could immediately object: "If the *citta* was originally pure, why then should it be born at all?" The Arahant, who has purified his *citta,* is one who never comes to birth again. If his *citta* were originally pure, why then would he need to purify it? This would be the obvious objection: What reason would there be to purify it? The radiant *citta,* on the other hand, can be purified because its radiance is nothing other than the essential, true nature of *avijjā.* Meditators will realize this truth clearly for themselves at the moment when the *citta* transcends this radiance to reach Absolute Freedom (*vimutti*). Then, the radiance

will no longer appear in the *citta.* At this very point, one realizes the supreme truth about the *citta.*

ONCE THE CITTA HAS BECOME SO WELL-CLEANSED that it is always bright and clear, then when we are in a quiet place, surrounded by complete silence—as in the still of the night—even though the *citta* has not 'converged' in *samādhi,* the focal point of its awareness is so exceedingly delicate and refined as to be indescribable. This subtle awareness manifests as a radiance that extends forth in all directions around us. We are unconscious of sights, sounds, odors, tastes, and tactile sensations, despite the fact that the *citta* has not entered *samādhi.* Instead, it is actually experiencing its own firm foundation, the very basis of the *citta* that has been well-cleansed to the point where a mesmerizing, majestic quality of knowing is its most prominent feature.

Seeming to exist independent of the physical body, this kind of extremely refined awareness stands out exclusively within the *citta.* Due to the subtle and pronounced nature of the *citta* at this stage, its knowing nature completely predominates. No images or visions appear there at all. It is an awareness that stands out exclusively on its own. This is one aspect of the *citta.*

Another aspect is seen when this well-cleansed *citta* enters meditative calm, not thinking or imagining anything. Ceasing all activity, all movement, it simply rests for awhile. All thought and imagination within the *citta* come to a complete halt. This is called "the *citta* entering a state of total calm." Then, the *citta*'s essential knowing nature is all that remains. Except for this very refined awareness—an awareness that seems to blanket the entire cosmos—absolutely nothing else appears. For unlike a beam of light, whose range is limited, reaching either near or far depending on the strength of the light, the flow of the *citta* has no limits,

no "near" or "far". For instance, the brightness of an electric light depends on its wattage. If the wattage is high, it shines a long distance; if low, a short distance. But the flow of the *citta* is very different. Distance is not a factor. To be precise, the *citta* is beyond the conditions of time and space, which allows it to blanket everything. Far is like near, for concepts of space do not apply. All that appears is a very refined awareness suffusing everything throughout the entire universe. The whole world seems to be filled by this subtle quality of knowing, as though nothing else exists, though things still exist in the world as they always have. The all-encompassing flow of the *citta* that has been cleansed of the things that cloud and obscure it, this is the *citta's* true power.

The *citta* that is absolutely pure is even more difficult to describe. Since it is something that defies definition, I don't know how I could characterize it. It cannot be expressed in the same way that conventional things in general can be, simply because it is not a conventional phenomenon. It is the sole province of those who have transcended all aspects of conventional reality, and thus realize within themselves that non-conventional nature. For this reason, words cannot describe it.

Why do we speak of a "conventional" citta and an "absolutely pure" *citta?* Are they actually two different *cittas?* Not at all. It remains the same *citta.* When it is controlled by conventional realities, such as *kilesas* and *āsavas,* that is one condition of the *citta.* But when the faculty of wisdom has scrubbed it clean until this condition has totally disintegrated, the true *citta,* the true Dhamma, the one that can stand the test, will not disintegrate and disappear along with it. Only the conditions of *anicca, dukkha* and *anattā,* which infiltrate the *citta,* actually disappear.

No matter how subtle the *kilesas* may be, they are still conditioned by *anicca, dukkha,* and *anattā,* and therefore, must be conventional phenomena. Once these things have completely disintegrated, the true *citta,* the one that has transcended conventional reality, becomes fully apparent. This is called the *citta's* Absolute Freedom, or the *citta's* Absolute Purity. All connections

continuing from the *citta's* previous condition have been severed forever. Now utterly pure, the *citta's* essential knowing nature remains alone on its own.

We cannot say where in the body this essential knowing nature is centered. Previously, with the conventional *citta,* it formed a prominent point that we could clearly see and know. For example, in *samādhi* we knew that it was centered in the middle of the chest because the knowing quality of our awareness stood out prominently there. The calm, the brightness, and the radiance appeared to emanate conspicuously from that point. We could see this for ourselves. All meditators whose level of calm has reached the very base of *samādhi* realize that the center of "what knows" stands out prominently in the region of the heart. They will not argue that it is centered in the brain, as those who have no experience in the practice of *samādhi* are always claiming.

But when the same *citta* has been cleansed until it is pure, that center then disappears. One can no longer say that the *citta* is located above or below, or that it is situated at any specific point in the body. It is now pure awareness, a knowing quality that is so subtle and refined that it transcends all conventional designations whatsoever. Still, in saying that it is "exceedingly refined", we are obliged to use a conventional figure of speech that cannot possibly express the truth; for, of course, the notion of extreme refinement is itself a convention. Since this refined awareness does not have a point or a center, it is impossible to specifically locate its position. There is only that essential knowing, with absolutely nothing infiltrating it. Although it still exists amid the same *khandhas* with which it used to intermix, it no longer shares any common characteristics with them. It is a world apart. Only then do we know clearly that the body, the *khandhas,* and the *citta* are all distinct and separate realities.

Glossary

Ācariya: Teacher, mentor; also used as a term of respect when referring to a senior monk. When capitalized, Ācariya is the respectful title given to a teacher by his disciples, as in Ācariya Mun and Ācariya Mahā Boowa.

akāliko: Timeless, not conditioned by time or season; existing beyond time and space. *Akāliko* is a traditional epithet for Dhamma.

Anāgāmī: Non-returner. An Anāgāmī is a person who has abandoned the five lower fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth, and who after death will appear in one of the worlds called the Pure Abodes, to eventually attain Nibbāna and thus never again to return to this world.

anattā: Not-self; the truth that all phenomena are devoid of anything that can be identified as "self". This means that none of the physical and mental components of personality (the 5 *khandhas*) make up an entity, either individual or collective, nor can a self-entity be found anywhere within the heart (*citta*). Therefore, what is experienced as being an abiding self is no more than a phantom personality born of ignorance and delusion—inherently transient, unstable, and bound up with suffering.

anicca: The unstable, impermanent, transient nature of all phenomena in all realms of existence. In other words, all things arise and cease, are subject to change, and will become otherwise, making them all inherently unsatisfactory and bound to cause suffering.

Arahant: A "fully enlightened one" or "pure one". A person who, by following the Buddha's Path to Freedom, has totally eradicated his mental defilements (*kilesas*) and thus possesses the certainty that all traces of ignorance and delusion have been conclusively destroyed, never to arise in his heart again in the future. Having completely severed the fetters that once bound him to the cycle of repeated birth and death, he is no longer destined for future rebirth. Thus, the Arahant is the individual who has attained Nibbāna; and though the physical and mental components of personality (*khandhas*) remain intact until his death, his *citta*—being free of all defiling elements whatsoever—is absolutely pure. At death, body and mind disintegrate, leaving only the unconditioned, absolutely pure nature of the *citta*—which is wholly beyond conventional description.

avijjā: Fundamental ignorance. This ignorance is the central factor in the delusion about the true nature of oneself and therefore the essential factor binding living beings to the cycle of rebirth. *Avijjā* exists entirely within the *citta* (the one who knows). Being an integral part of the *citta's* conscious perspective since time-without beginning, it has usurped the *citta's* "knowing nature" and distorted its intrinsic quality of simply "knowing" by creating the false duality of the "knower" and the "known". From this individual viewpoint spring right and wrong, good and evil, heaven and hell, and the whole mass of suffering that comprises the world of *saṁsāra*. Thus *avijjā* is the seed of being and birth, the very nucleus of all existence. It is also the well-spring from which all other mental defilements arise.

Far from appearing dark and menacing, *avijjā* is the epitome of all the mental and spiritual virtues that living beings hold in the very highest esteem. This is its beguiling allure, the reason why living beings cannot see it for what it actually is—the great lord and master of birth and death. Appearing at first to be the ultimate in virtue and happiness, the *citta's* true abiding sanctuary, when wisdom finally penetrates to its core and exposes its fundamental deception, *avijjā* promptly dissipates, revealing the pure, unblemished *citta*, the true Supreme Happiness, Nibbāna.

bhikkhu: A Buddhist monk; a male member of the Buddhist Sangha who has gone forth into homelessness and received the higher ordination. In Theravāda countries today, *bhikkhus* form the nucleus of the Buddhist community. Living entirely off donations of food and other basic requisites, their monastic lifestyle is based on the principles of poverty, celibacy, virtue, and meditation.

bodhi: Awakening; enlightenment; transcendent wisdom. *Bodhi* is equated with perfection of insight into the Four Noble Truths and the realization of Nibbāna, the cessation of all suffering.

brahma (*brahmā*): Celestial beings who inhabit the first three realms of the Fine Material World. Beings reborn into those sublime realms are said to have some experience with the meditative absorptions (*jhāna*). Consequently, *brahmas* have extremely refined bodies composed of pure light and experience extremely refined degrees of mental pleasure. When the good *kamma* that sent them to those realms is finally exhausted, these beings pass away and are reborn again somewhere else, in a realm of existence suitable to their remaining *kamma*.

Buddhasāsana: The Teachings of the Lord Buddha and, by extension, the Buddhist religion in general (see *sāsana*).

buddho: Supremely enlightened. A traditional epithet for the Buddha, *buddho* is a preparatory meditation-word (*parikamma*) that is repeated mentally while reflecting on the Buddha's special qualities. In its simplest form, one focuses attention exclusively on the repetition of "*buddho*", continuously thinking the word "*buddho*" while in meditation. One should simply be aware of each repetition of "*buddho, buddho, buddho*" to the exclusion of all else. Once it becomes continuous, this simple repetition will produce results of peace and calm in the heart.

citta: The *citta* is the mind's essential knowing nature, the fundamental quality of knowing that underlies all sentient existence. When associated with a physical body, it is referred to as "mind" or "heart". Being corrupted by the defiling influence of fundamental ignorance (*avijjā*), its currents "flow out" to manifest as feelings (*vedanā*), memory (*saññā*), thoughts (*sankhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), thus embroiling the *citta* in a web of self-deception. It is deceived about its own true nature. *The true nature of the citta is that it simply "knows". There is no subject, no object, no duality; it simply knows. The citta does not arise or pass away; it is never born and never dies.*

Normally, the "knowing nature" of the *citta* is timeless, boundless, and radiant, but this true nature is obscured by the defilements (*kilesa*) within it. Through the power of fundamental ignorance, a focal point of the "knower" is created from which that knowing nature views the world outside. The establishment of that false center creates a "self" from whose perspective consciousness flows out to perceive the duality of the "knower" and the "known". Thus the *citta* becomes entangled with things that are born, become ill, grow old, and die, and therefore, deeply involved it in a whole mass of suffering.

In this book the *citta* is often referred to as the heart; the two are synonymous. The heart forms the core within the body. It is the center, the substance, the primary essence within the body. It is the basic foundation. Conditions that arise from the *citta,* such as thoughts, arise there. Goodness, evil, happiness, and suffering all come together in the heart.

Samādhi meditation provides confirmation of the heart's significance. When the *citta* gathers all of its outflowing currents into one point, the calm, still state of *samādhi* arises. From the meditator's perspective, that experience is centered in the middle of the chest. The stillness, the brightness, and the awareness of this experience appear to emanate prominently from the region of the heart. The knowing nature of the *citta* is pronounced right there. Thus, the true seat of consciousness is

in the heart; and it is wise, therefore, to avoid thinking of the "mind" as essentially cerebral and located in the head.

There is a strong tendency to think that consciousness results purely from complex interactions within the human brain, and that when the brain dies, consciousness ceases. This mechanistic view is wholly mistaken. While there is evidence that certain parts of the brain can be identified with certain mental functions, that does not mean that the brain produces consciousness. In essence, the brain is a complex processing organ. It receives and processes incoming data impulses that inform about feelings, memory, thoughts, and consciousness, but it does not generate these mental functions; nor does it generate conscious awareness. That is entirely the province of the *citta*. (for a more detailed discussion see the Appendix on page 95)

'converge': When the *citta* gathers all of its outflowing currents into one point, this is known as the *citta* 'converging'. The practice of *samādhi* meditation is a method for concentrating all of these diverse currents into one focal point, thus centering the *citta* into a condition of complete stillness and calm.

Dhamma (skt. Dharma): Supreme Truth; the basic principles of that Truth; transcendent spiritual qualities; the Buddha's Teaching. First and foremost, Dhamma is the quintessential nature of perfect harmony existing in and of itself, independent of all phenomena, yet permeating every aspect of sentient existence. Dhamma is the right natural order of things that forms the underlying basis for all existence, though it is not dependent on or conditioned by any form of existence. Ultimately, Dhamma is the sum of those transcendent qualities, such as detachment, loving kindness and wisdom, the spiritual perfection of which brings the mind into harmony with the Supreme Truth. By further extension, Dhamma encompasses the basic principles that are the essence of the Buddha's Teaching, including the patterns of behavior that should be practiced so as to harmonize oneself with the right natural order of things.

dukkha: Suffering, pain, discontent; the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomena. *Dukkha* is the condition of fundamental discontent that is inherent within the very nature of all sentient existence. Essentially, it is the underlying sense of dissatisfaction that ultimately undermines even the most pleasant experiences, for everything in the phenomenal world is subject to change and therefore unreliable. Thus, all of samsāric existence is characterized by *dukkha*.

kāmarāga: Sexual desire; lust. Predicated on a belief that the body is oneself and that happiness can be achieved for oneself through bodily sensations, *kāmarāga* is the desire, even craving, to seek pleasure and self-gratification by means of the physical body. With this mental defilement as the driving force, people attempt to overcome discontent and find fulfillment using physical stimulation as the primary means. If such craving is allowed a free rein, it easily becomes a preoccupation that gives rise to even more craving, leaving the heart forever hungry and dissatisfied.

kamma (skt. karma): One's intentional actions of body, speech, and mind that result in birth and future existence. These actions carry with them a specific moral content—good, bad, or neutral—and leave in the ongoing continuum of consciousness a potential to engender corresponding results in the future. Buddhism holds that all unenlightened beings are bound to be born, live, die, and be reborn again and again in a variety of worlds and circumstances, a perpetual cycle of existence that is driven by the nature of their *kamma* and the inevitable manifestation of its consequences.

khandha: Literally, "group" or "aggregate". In the plural, *khandhas* refer to the five physical and mental components of personality (body, feelings, memory, thoughts, consciousness) and to sensory experience in general (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations). Also known as "aggregates of attachment" because they are the objects of a craving for personal existence, they are, in fact, simply classes of natural phenomena that continuously arise and cease and are devoid of any enduring self-identity whatsoever.

kilesa: Mental defilement. *Kilesa* are negative psychological and emotional forces existing within the hearts and minds of all living beings. These defilements are of three basic types: greed, hatred, and delusion. All of them are degenerate pollutants that contaminate the way people think, speak and act, and thus corrupt from within the very intention and purpose of their existence, binding them (through the inevitable consequences of their actions) ever more firmly to the perpetual cycle of rebirth. Their manifestations are many and varied. They include passion, jealousy, envy, conceit, vanity, pride, stinginess, arrogance, anger, resentment, etc., plus all sorts of more subtle variations that invariably produce the unwholesome and harmful states of mind which are responsible for so much human misery. These various *kilesa*-driven mental states interact and combine to create patterns of conduct that perpetuate people's suffering and give rise to all of the world's disharmony.

magga, *phala*, and Nibbāna: The Transcendent Paths, their Fruition, and Nibbāna. As used by Ācariya Mahā Boowa, the expression *magga, phala*, and Nibbāna refers to the transcendent nature of the Buddhist path of practice and its primary aim of leading one, stage by stage, through successive levels of spiritual liberation until one ultimately reaches the absolute freedom of Nibbāna.

mindfulness (*sati*): Attentiveness; the ability to keep one's attention deliberately fixed on whatever one chooses to observe. In all forms of meditation, this means an uninterrupted span of attention focused directly on the chosen object of meditation or on the unfolding process of occurring phenomena that is the subject of investigation. Mindfulness is the one faculty that's essential to every type of meditation. Without it the mind will invariably falter and fail to achieve its objectives.

nāma: Mental phenomena. *Nāma* refers to the mental components of personality (*nāmakhandha*), which include feelings, memory, thoughts, and consciousness.

Nibbāna (skt. Nirvana): Literally meaning "extinguished", Nibbāna is compared to a lamp or a fire going out. That is to say, the threefold fire of greed, hatred and delusion goes out in the heart due to lack of fuel. The extinguishing of this fire frees the mind from everything that binds it to the cycle of rebirth and the suffering experienced therein. Nibbāna is Absolute Freedom, the Supreme Happiness. As such, it is the ultimate goal of the Buddhist training. It is said to be Unborn, Deathless, and Unconditioned, but being totally detached from all traces of conventional reality, a description of what Nibbāna is, or is not, lies wholly beyond the range of conventional figures of speech.

Pāli: An ancient variant of Sanskrit, Pāli is the literary language of the early Buddhists and the language in which the texts of the original Buddhist Canon are preserved. Most of the terms that have been italicized in this book are Pāli words.

rūpa: The body, and physical phenomena in general. When opposed to *nāma* (mental phenomena), *rūpa* is the strictly physical component of personality.

sādhu: "It is well." Commonly used in Buddhist circles, *sādhu* is an exclamation expressing appreciation, assent, or approval.

samādhi: Meditative calm and concentration. *Samādhi* is experienced by practicing various meditation techniques that are designed to calm the mind's emotional turbulence and mental distraction by fixing it firmly

on a single object of attention and mindfully holding it there until the mind becomes fully absorbed in that single preoccupation to the exclusion of everything else, and thus wholly integrated within a simple, unified state of awareness. By concentrating one's attention on just one object, distracting thoughts and currents of the mind that would normally flow out into the sensory environment are gradually gathered into one inner point of focus, one still, calm, concentrated state called *samādhi*. This does not mean that the mind is striving to concentrate on one point (an outward focus), but rather that by assiduously following the method with mindful attention, the mind naturally, on its own accord, converges into a unified state of awareness. The resulting experience is a feeling of pure and harmonious being that is so wondrous as to be indescribable. Upon withdrawing from *samādhi*, this calm, concentrated mental focus then serves as a basis for successfully pursuing investigative techniques to develop wisdom and gain insight into the true nature of all phenomena.

saṁsāra: The round of rebirth without beginning, in which all living beings revolve. *Saṁsāra* is the name given to the continuous process of being born, getting sick, growing old, and dying—an uninterrupted succession of births, deaths, and rebirths. It encompasses the entire universe of sentient existence, from the grossest beings to the most refined, from the highest realms of the Immaterial World to the lowest realms of hell. All existence within this cycle is subject to change, inherently unstable, and burdened with pain and suffering, with each state of existence being determined by a being's intentional actions of body, speech, and mind (*kamma*). The attainment of Nibbāna marks the complete transcendence of the world of *saṁsāra*.

Sangha: The community of the Buddha's disciples. On the conventional level, this means the Buddhist monastic order. On the ideal level, it refers to those of the Buddha's followers, whether lay or ordained, who have attained at least the first of the four Transcendent Paths culminating in Arahantship.

sankhāra: As a general term, *sankhāra* refers to all forces that form or condition things in the phenomenal world of mind and matter, and to those formed or conditioned phenomena that result. As the fourth component of personality (*sankhāra khandha*) it refers to thought and imagination; that is, the thoughts that constantly form in the mind and conceptualize about one's personal perceptions. *Sankhāra* creates these ideas and then hands them on to *saññā*, which interprets and elaborates on them, making assumptions about their significance.

saññā: Memory; recognition of physical and mental phenomena as they arise. As the third component of personality, *saññā khandha* is associated with the function of memory; for instance, recognition, association, and interpretation. *Saññā* both recognizes the known and gives meaning and significance to all of one's personal perceptions. Through recollection of past experience, the function of memory gives things specific meanings and then falls for its own interpretation of them, causing one to become either sad or glad about what one perceives.

sāsana: The teaching of the Buddha and, by extension, the Buddhist religion in general. The Buddhist spiritual path is inevitably a multidimensional one where all legitimate wholesome practices, from generosity to virtuous conduct to transcendent meditation, are essential aspects of the way leading toward the ultimate goal, the cessation of suffering. The term *sāsana* usually refers to this aggregate of the Buddha's teaching, its practices, and its realization.

sāvaka: A direct disciple of the Lord Buddha who hears the Buddha's teaching and declares him to be his teacher.

Supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom: Mindfulness (*sati*) is the faculty of being keenly attentive to whatever arises within one's field of awareness. Wisdom (*paññā*) is the faculty of intuitive insight that probes, examines, and analyzes the nature of phenomena as mindfulness becomes aware of them. Supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom are these two faculties developed to an advanced level of proficiency characterized by heightened alertness, quickness, and agility, combined with incisive powers of reasoning. Constantly working in unison, without a moment's lapse in concentration, supreme-mindfulness and supreme-wisdom are said to be capable of automatically tracking and penetrating to the truth of all phenomena as they arise and cease. Being the only mental faculties capable of investigating the increasingly more subtle defilements at the highest stage of the Transcendent Path (*arahattamagga*), their development is a prerequisite for reaching this level of practice and thus for attaining the ultimate goal, Nibbāna.

Theravāda: "Doctrine of the Elders". Handed down to us in the Pāli language, it is the oldest form of the Buddha's teachings. Theravāda is the only one of the early schools of Buddhism to have survived into the present. It is currently the dominant form of Buddhism in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma.

three worlds of existence: The Sensuous World (*Kāma-loka*), The Fine Material World (*Rūpa-loka*), and the Immaterial World (*Arūpa-loka*), which together comprise the entire universe of sentient existence.

vimutti: Absolute Freedom, that is, freedom from the fabrications and conventions of the mind. *Vimutti* is a synonym for Nibbāna.

viññāṇa: Consciousness; simple cognizance. As the fifth component of personality, *viññāṇa khandha* simply registers sense data, feelings, and mental impressions as they occur. For instance, when visual images make contact with the eye, or when thoughts occur in the mind, consciousness of them arises simultaneously. When that object subsequently ceases, so too does the consciousness that took note of it.

wisdom (*paññā*): The term wisdom denotes an active, incisive application of the principles of cause and effect for the purpose of probing, examining, and analyzing physical and mental phenomena, as they arise and cease, so as to see them for what they really are: inherently impermanent and unstable, bound up with pain and suffering, and devoid of anything that can be identified as "self". As it is used in Buddhism, wisdom implies much more than just sound judgement. Wisdom is a faculty that searches, probes, compares, and investigates the workings of body and mind in light of the fundamental principles of truth in order to gain a decisive advantage over the defiling elements (*kilesas*) that obscure their true nature and the true nature of the one who knows them.

Although inductive reasoning is initially very much a part of the practice of wisdom, insights based solely on it are still superficial. As the faculty of wisdom develops and becomes more introspective, its skills become increasingly more subtle, while its insights become more intuitive in nature. Only when meditative insight penetrates deeply can the root causes of the mind's discontent be truly exposed, uprooted, and destroyed.

In general, wisdom is the proactive complement to the quiescence of *samādhi*. Both work together in tandem to ensure that the task of eradicating the *kilesas* is accomplished with maximum efficiency. Both are essential aspects of the path leading to the cessation of all suffering.

About the Translator

Born Richard E. Byrd, Jr. at Winchester, Virginia in 1948, Bhikkhu Sīlaratano was ordained as a Buddhist monk at Bangkok, Thailand in 1977, having already undergone several years of Buddhist training in India and Sri Lanka. Since his ordination, he has been resident in Thailand, practicing under the tutelage of Ācariya Mahā Boowa.

Other books by Ācariya Mahā Boowa that have been translated into English for free distribution:

1. Venerable Ācariya Mun Bhūridatta Thera — A Spiritual Biography

Translation by Sīlaratano Bhikkhu

Excerpt from Chapter 1: "Curious about the talk of a huge, malevolent spirit with supernatural powers, Ācariya Mun asked and was told that a trespasser usually saw some sign of those powers on the very first night. An ominous dream often accompanied fitful sleep: An enormous black spirit, towering overhead, threatened to drag the dreamer to his death, shouting that it had long been the cave's guardian exercising absolute authority over the whole area, and would allow no one to trespass. So any trespasser was immediately chased away, for it accepted no authority greater than its own, except that of a person of impeccable virtue and a loving, compassionate heart, who extended these noble qualities to all living beings. A person of such nobility was allowed to live in the cave. The spirit would even protect him and pay him homage, but it did not tolerate narrow-minded, selfish, ill-behaved intruders."

2. Venerable Ācariya Mun's Paṭipadā: His Lineage's Way of Practice

The Companion Volume to Venerable Ācariya Mun's Biography

Translation by Venerable Ācariya Paññāvaḍḍho Thera

Excerpt from Chapter 1: "When we are truly up against it with no way out and cannot find any other refuge, we must try and think of how to help ourselves. Dhamma is by nature the most valuable and productive refuge: and when we submit to it, and it enters our hearts as the refuge of our heart, then at any time when we are in the greatest need of a refuge, the Dhamma gives results which show themselves to us, immediately right before our eyes and in our hearts, giving us no room for doubt whatsoever."

3. Venerable Ācariya Khao Anālayo: A Forest Meditation Master's Biography

Translation by Venerable Ācariya Paññāvaḍḍho Thera

Excerpt: "The wisest of people have always praised mindfulness and wisdom ever since ancient times, saying that they are the most exalted things and are never out of date. You should therefore think and search and dig up mindfulness and wisdom and promote them as the means and method of defending yourself and destroying the enemy within you completely and finally. Then you will see the most excellent and precious sphere of heart that has always been there within

yourself since endless ages past. This Dhamma that I am teaching to you comes entirely from the Dhamma that I have looked into and experienced as a result. It is not based on guesswork—like scratching without being able to locate where the irritation is—for what I teach comes from what I have known and seen and been, with no uncertainty."

4. Wisdom Develops Samādhi

A Guide to the Practice of the Buddha's Meditation Methods

Translation by Venerable Ācariya Paññāvaḍḍho Thera

Excerpt from Part 1: "It should be understood that *samādhi* of all types is what aids and supports the development of wisdom, and the extent to which it does this depends on the strength of one's *samādhi.* In other words, *samādhi* which is gross, middling, or subtle aids and supports wisdom which is gross, middling, or subtle respectively, and it is up to a wise person to turn his *samādhi* to use by developing wisdom.

But generally speaking, whatever type of *samādhi* is attained, one who practises meditation is likely to become attached to it, because when the *citta* drops into a concentrated state and while it rests there, a state of calm and happiness is present. It can be said that in being attached to *samādhi,* or calm, the *citta* has no problems while it remains concentrated, and can remain at rest for as long as one wishes, depending on the level of one's *samādhi.*"

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